[46] Chapter 3

Political, Administrative, and Judicial Organization of the Mossi Empire

I. Political and Administrative Organization

643 The Mossi empire of Ouagadougou was governed prior to the period of French occupation by a supreme chief, the Mogho Naba, who was revered by all his subjects as a "god" and whose territory, in the minds of his people, had no limits. He had the power of life and death over all his subjects.

[192] The word mogho means "country of the Mossi," but by extension it also means "the world." Thus, in this sense the Mogho Naba was regarded as the master of the world.

643 631 It is said that he had under his rule 333 chiefs, naba, among whom were his ministers, the three sogon'kassemsé (great servitors), and some forty petty chiefs called kougzindba, which refers to the heaps of stones designating the place of each minister or petty naba in the emperor's court.

643 177 The authority of the Mogho Naba over his vassals. In spite of the claims made by a colonial official who was trying to free the canton chiefs of one of the administrative districts of the colony from the authority of the Mogho Naba, the emperor's power never was merely nominal. If it has become so, it is a consequence of the intervention of French [47] administrative authority in the politics of the country -- an intervention which has resulted in assigning too much power to certain chiefs.

643 669 I do not mean to imply that before French penetration into the country there were not real conflicts, wars or mere skirmishes (1),

1. In Chapter 1 [not translated]we described in great detail the war waged by the Mogho Nabas Sanum and Wobgo against Lallé. We said also that Sanum warred with the Boussouma Naba and with Boulsa.

but the chiefs who tried by these means to free themselves from the emperor's authority were usually punished for their temerity.

576 643 Thus, although the Mogho Naba would not in the least object to shaking hands with a Bambara or a Djerma, he would be astonished if a native Moaga -- even an official -- should offer his hand.

573 576 As soon as the children of a naba have reached the age of discretion, they may no longer play with their "papa," even less shake hands with him. They must henceforth follow the general rule which requires the Mossi salute, kantissé.

576 602 [111] Nowadays naba (kombemba) and nayiridamba (ministers of the emperor) understand the uselessness of such signs of distrust. Therefore, even though they continue to be less familiar with their relatives (brothers, uncles, and sons -- whom they regard as rivals), they willingly offer their hands to Mossi of any standing and to foreigners.

644 Reception by the naba. 1) Up to the present time and despite some thirty-five years of French occupation, the way one is received at the court of the emperor, which, of course, befalls his servitors, has altered very little. Natives who are now officials in the administration and in business enterprises are still treated on the same footing as their less highly placed compatriots. Not only are they required to perform the kantissé (Mossi salute) as described by Father Mangin, but also afterwards they must sit on the ground, a position that is difficult in European clothes. Foreigners (Bambara, [648] Djerma, even Gourounsi) are offered seats because the soroné do not regard them as fellow countrymen.

645 576 352 177 2) By the ministers. At the present time all the emperor's ministers have comfortable houses and splendid drawing rooms furnished with Morris chairs and folding chairs. These seats are offered [112] to visitors of any standing, while benches two or three meters long are reserved for persons of less consequence (house boys, cooks, circle guards, notables, etc.).

631 576 352 3) By the kombemba. Benches are always reserved for visitors of note or, if there are none, mats are provided. Some of these chiefs even own a few commonplace chairs and perhaps one or two folding chairs.

551 645 [134] (b) Kata laghem koagb'kon sirigh tanga. (A hundred barking hyenas cannot shake a mountain.)

6. Kamsoro Naba (Ouene Nongué), Naba Niouga ("cat"). He is chief eunuch. Nioug'nok wendé na pa ne Sabelem. (A cat who trusts in God is sure to preserve his blackness.) In other words, one who is protected by the Mogho Naba, his "God," will never lack for anything; everything will come to him as if by magic.

551 643 835 7. Naba Gnighnemdo (Mogho Naba). Naba Oubri, the founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty, fell in love with one of his own daughters and had intercourse with her. The girl became pregnant and gave birth to a son. The wives of Naba Oubri wanted to put both the child and the mother to death. They asked the girl the name of the child's father, and she replied, "Ask my father, he ought to know." When Oubri was questioned, he answered: "Bassi yan ya mam lam gnighnemdo (Do nothing, this is my own flesh)."

The child of this incestuous union was thus named Gnighnemdo and later succeeded his relative, Naba Nasbiré.

The Placing of Statues at Loumbi-Raogo

211 306 532 Ganlougdou. In the old days, upon the death of a Mogho Naba or soon after, a jeweler was called in [135] to make a wax statuette, later to be cast in bronze, in the likeness of the late chief. The jeweler also made statuettes of one soroné, one napagha, one bendré, and one lounga, and all were deposited at the home of the Loumbila Naba. This practice was suppressed upon the arrival of the French, and it appears that there is no statue of Naba Siguiri, father of Naba Kom, the present naba, at Loumbila. [177]

The acting Mogho Naba is never supposed to see these statues, and the jeweler who made the likeness of his father must not see them either. The jeweler was paid 100,000 cowries, a horse, a donkey, a cow, a wife, a large robe, and 1,000 kola nuts, and he was then sent away from Ouagadougou. He must never return and must never see the new Mogho Naba. [135]

These gifts represented a considerable sum in the old days, even today for that matter. They were given to aid the jeweler in consulting seers and charlatans for the purpose of prolonging his life. Tradition has it that unless he followed faithfully the prescriptions given by the seers, he would die within a year after completing the statues.

796 643 of the present house of Ouendasida, the police adjutant), and there he attended the salam presided over by the Imam.

After the ceremony, the Imam, surrounded by the faithful, went to call upon the emperor for the doua (a kind of benediction involving the recitation of verses from the Koran). The Imam received kola nuts and sheep or a cow.

[368] At the present time the two mosques exist in name only; the one real mosque is that of the Imam in the ward of the mohémé (marabouts). The present Mogho Naba never attends the salam on feast days. He goes to the Circle [Administration Building], then to the home of the Governor, and finally returns home to await the visit of the representative of Islam in Mossi country.

643 368 177 The only Mogho Naba who was truly a Moslem was Naba Koutou, the twenty-seventh successor of Oubri. He was sent to the Koranic school at Sagabtenga and is said to have made a creditable record there. When he succeeded his father, he installed a mosque in front of the women's gate. Since then a mosque has traditionally been located in the same place on the palace grounds of every Mogho Naba, even though, as in the case of the present emperor, he was not a believer.

643 ●177 Naba Koutou regularly made his salam in accordance with the rites of the Moslem faith and even observed the thirty days of abstinence during the month of fasting. [210] All his children had Moslem names. All, except his eldest son who succeeded him as Naba Sanum, were sent to Koranic schools, although none did any serious work there since they were more interested in becoming naba.

643 696 During his lifetime, Naba Koutou himself never sentenced anyone to death, even if he were guilty. He loved peace. When his ministers submitted serious cases to him, he always said: "Go and do what seems best and do not tell me what fate was meted out to the guilty." Like Pontius Pilate, he allowed his ministers to bear the responsibility for the crimes. Since he gave little credence to what the priests said of poéré (confession by the use of magic), he acquitted individuals condemned to death by that barbaric method.

Chapter 13

Dwellings of the Mossi Chiefs

342 554 787 We have seen, in an earlier chapter under "Labor Duties and Obligations of Mossi Subjects to their Chiefs," how the dwelling of the naba is built and repaired. We know also that the naba like all his subjects, consults a soothsayer to select the site for his dwelling. He needs to know whether he should keep his father's establishment, build a new one on the site of his grandfather's home, or finally, if the spirits are not favorable, whether he might build on unoccupied land.

342 554 The establishment of a naba differed from those of his subjects in former times in the great number of huts included within it. Also, there was an empty ostrich egg on the roof of each hut.

The sketch which follows shows the home of a naba before the arrival of the French. Such houses exist even today in certain areas.

There were no native houses with terraces or clay roofs. To be sure, the Mogho Naba had one, but although it was copied from the Djenné style, [214] it had, aside from a few doors and tiny windows, only a single opening in the ceiling the size of a canari. This was supposed to admit air to the inhabitants, and it was blocked up during the winter.

The Ouidi Naba (first minister) and the Kamsaongo Naba (chief eunuch) also had tata, but they were smaller. The former kept the sacred water (nam-tibo) and the latter the wealth of his master, the emperor.

342 177 A description of the typical dwelling of the Moaga will be given later. At present, especially since the installation of the [French] government at Ouagadougou, virtually all of the province and canton chiefs have dwellings more or less of the European type. The present tata of the Mogho Naba, the Baloum Naba, and the Ouidi Naba at Ouagadougou, those of the Konkistenga Naba at Imasshoro and at Zoétigomdé, and that of the Lallé Naba at Koudougou -- to mention only the principal ones -- prove that real progress has been made in housing by the Mossi chiefs.

342 Of course, like all European houses in the region under dis-
177 cussion, these buildings are, unfortunately, made of mud bricks, but is that not the rule in French West Africa?

342 In the homes of those two ministers of the emperor who are most advanced, the reception rooms are arranged in such a way that callers benefit from a constant flow of fresh air through large openings. During periods of extreme heat, a punkah operated [417] by a sogoné in the middle [216] of the room provides air for the panting visitors. The wall, always whitewashed with kaolin, bears an [353] an advertisement or two, the picture of an important chief, or perhaps some family photographs, which enliven the apartments a bit. All of this shows a real anxiety on the part of the chiefs to develop along the lines of progress and civilization.

In recent years, some of the notables at Ouagadougou have built houses with clay roofs, not so much to live in as to safeguard their family valuables against fire and theft.

Finally, it should be noted that custom requires every new naba for the first three years of his reign to live in songodo, straw huts, which will be described later. Only then may he build with clay.

Dwellings of Mossi Subjects

342 Temporary dwelling. Before building his conjugal hut, the
787 young man consults a soothsayer in order to make sure that the site chosen is not haunted by evil spirits and that he will have happiness and good fortune if he lives there.

342 Even if the soothsayer finds nothing especially alarming about
787 the site, he always orders a chicken or other animal to be sacrificed or alms to be given. The young man arranges with the village elder [217] or, if he is a [Nioniosse], with the Tingsoba (from tenga "earth," and soba, "master"), to sacrifice the victim.

The Tingsoba goes to the site and calls for two small gourds which contain ordinary water and water mixed with flour, respectively. He invokes all his ancestors and pours the water on the ground, praying God to accept it for His wife, Tinga, who is absorbing it. Then he kills the chicken, saying: "On -- on,

291 554 435 (d) Zag'banko: a colored garment, varying in price between 40,000 and 50,000 cowries.

(e) Baourou ganga: a light gray blanket, valued [224] at 50,000 to 60,000 cowries, which can easily be made into robes and trousers.

[439] All these garments were imported by traveling Haoussa (Zangoéto) and a few Yarcé, the only traders at the time, who bought them in Gambaga (Gold Coast), the only known trading center at that time. As we have pointed out in an earlier chapter, the Mossi knew of no country other than their own.

There were, of course, some naba who wore only rough garments made of cotton strips woven locally.

Headgear. The inhabitants of Béré (a village of the province now ruled by the Gounga Naba) used to make caps, called manfo, which were highly prized by Mossi chiefs (priced at 2,000 to 3,000 cowries).

Some notables wore caps made at Wéogtinga (province of the Ouidi Naba) by the descendants of Naba Zombré, the twentieth successor of Oubri.

291 554 177 2. Modifications and improvements introduced since the establishment of the government of Upper Volta (1919). The various fabrics available in the European outlets and the fine white or blue bazin [fabric] are more and more being used to replace the clothing of former times. [225] These fabrics are made into robes, trousers, blouses, and forkia (this last is a kind of long blouse with wide sleeves, much prized by Senegalese [352] traders). Shirts of every conceivable color and style are hoarded in trunks and chests bought at the commissary or made locally by carpenters trained in European shops.

Many chiefs claim that garments made of cotton strips are heavy and cumbersome and impede walking.

[439] Oriental caps imported from the Gold Coast, dark red velvet hats, and even sun helmets are replacing the headgear of old.

The markatassé and mougou, rustic leather boots made by Mossi shoemakers are giving way to shoes, puttees, and leggings, [444] or to new types of boots and slippers -- the shoemakers of Djenné are now well known among the Mossi.

291 554 177 Finally, many chiefs (particularly province chiefs and dignitaries at the emperor's court) appear on feast days dressed in costumes ornately embroidered in gold and silver, products of Moroccan industry. Two of these ministers even wear with pride European costumes on these occasions.

Dress of the Mossi Subjects

292 Men. The accouterments and weapons of a Moaga who wished to be admired on festive occasions used to include the following: the koiglinga and the dandaogo (kinds of long blouses with sleeves); koursi(trousers) in dark blue; the karfo (seldom worn, [226] however, because of its high cost); a zangoégo [411] (large Haoussa knife); a manyanfo (cap); a logwaoga (quiver and arrows); and a boussan-zandé (iron club).

292 177 Today he wears the same garments made from cotton strips woven locally (except the karfo), but it should be noted that young men who return from the Gold Coast or neighboring colonies nearly always have clothing made of commercial fabrics. They may even -- and this often happens -- parade a second-hand overcoat. In the villages out in the bush, the large knife (zangoégo) is still worn, hanging from the shoulder by an albolé (ornament).

Some young men, however, usually traders in prosperous circumstances, dress in the fashion of the Sudanese who live in cities.

291 Women. A Moaga woman usually had only three skirts: (a) the skirt worn at home which was her working costume; (b) an indigo-blue skirt (fou-sablaga) which was reserved for holidays and for trips to the market; and (c) a white or dark-blue skirt cloth, trimmed with long fringes -- a kind of bambara dissa -- which she wore over her shoulders or over her head on ceremonial occasions. She replaced these articles whenever necessary.

[554 435] Only the wives of naba and of certain notables [227] were able to own, in addition to the forementioned skirts, a godé, a skirt of Haoussa origin and quite expensive (1).

1. Even today it costs between 55 and 100 francs.

301 As ornaments the Moaga woman had only red or yellow copper bracelets and the kindifou (a bright red bead). Even then only women of means could procure such ornaments. The [435] kindifou cost only 50 cowries a bead, but since cowries were monopolized by the naba, notables, and rakangba (prosperous Mossi), the beads were far too expensive for the small resources of the average Moaga woman.

Bracelets made of a special stone (a mixture of gray and white) and called manekagcé (manekaka in the singular) were worn only by the Yarbi (young Yarcé of both sexes). It is said [439] that these bracelets were peddled by the Kibissi (Habé), and they seem to have come from the Timbuktu area.

301 554 Silver bracelets were worn only by the dimbissi (descendants of dima, that is, the family of the Mogho Naba), by kombemba (canton and province chiefs) and their descendants, and, finally, by prominent persons who were in favor at court.

291 177 At the present time, especially at Ouagadougou, the women adorn themselves with garments of all kinds (skirts of native material, bazin, godé, and other fabrics, as well as skirts from stores). Some have even adopted the blouse and ample robe affected by elegant Sudanese [228] women. Many now own trunks which [352] replace the sacks formerly used to store their clothing.

291 178 The Senegalese handkerchief, a head scarf, is now considered absolutely indispensable. In rural areas there is an increasing desire to dress better. More cotton is grown. Girls and women from the bush buy glass beads of all colors when they come to Ouagadougou to work, and they wear them around their necks or around their hips in the manner of Bambara women.

416 Although the "mirror" used to be the clear water of springs and brooks, there is hardly a woman today who does not have one or two mirrors. Finally, a bit of elegance is added to the wild 301 beauty of the women by silver earrings, bracelets, and amulets sewed in a panther skin -- these are becoming a passion with Mossi peasant women.

291 It should not be inferred from the above that the Moaga always feels obliged to wear clothing at home. Any time that he has no need to go out or to visit a friend or relative at some

433 made do with what his own village could produce, and there was
178 really no trade in the ordinary sense of the word. The Moaga, essentially a stay-at-home, depended on the soil for food and clothing.

241 Only two new crops have been added since the coming of the
177 French: yams (na-niouyan, "chiefs' yams") and white potatoes. The recent increase in the cultivation of cotton makes it easier for the natives to meet their tax, and this encourages them to grow even more.

178 The French occupation has brought many benefits in its wake (creation of a network of roads, peace and the resulting free circulation among the villages, and suppression of banditry and looting), but it has also given the Moaga a desire to leave the country.

167 The extensive recruitment of [249] laborers for the needs of
464 other colonies in the area, for work on the roads, and for the now obligatory military service -- all of which are accepted reluctantly by the Mossi -- has caused many young men to emigrate.

Some of them set out, for the Gold Coast preferably, without the slightest means of support. They go to work in the English colony in order to earn money for clothes. Since they had no money when they started out, they remain there for months or even years, and this seriously diminishes the agricultural labor force at home. It also forces their old and helpless relatives to cultivate their fields alone.

Besides, so many of them never return!

The Native Diet

262 Sagbo (millet mush) is the principal item in the Mossi diet at all social levels. Rice, regarded as a luxury food, is eaten by the naba and notables. It costs from two and a half to three francs a
[435] kilogram at Ouagadougou and is therefore too expensive for most people. It may be added that it rarely is found in the diet of civil service employees.

264 Mossi chiefs usually have two main meals a day: a [250] first meal of sagbo or rice at around nine in the morning, and a second

177 The preceding pages deal wholly with past history. The French occupation has profoundly modified the whole administrative set-up and curtailed the rights of nabas, who are now mere civil servants. The people are slowly learning not to fear them; their authority is weakening; the gifts dwindle; and the nabas have been put on short allowance and forced to cultivate their fields like everybody else. Their judicial power is practically gone, and those few who have preserved real authority were able to do so because of their remoteness from administrative centers and their past. They were in charge before the French occupation, and they have managed to keep up their prestige in spite of everything. Yet little by little attitudes 000 change and respect vanishes. Is this good? Is it bad? The matter could be argued at great length. Although this administrative system led to regrettable abuses which had to be checked, it also had its favorable aspects, and it made the Mossi into one of the most feared and most homogeneous peoples in the bend of the Niger.

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BOOK II. FAMILY LIFE

Chapter 1. Establishment of the Family Through Marriage

562 584 567 The family is established through marriage. We shall, therefore, first study the marriage bond. Obviously, since Christianity was introduced in the country only a short time ago, virginity is unknown there even as a concept. Every nubile girl must marry. She is given in marriage by the person to whom she belongs, and her own tastes are not taken into account. She belongs primarily to her father, but sometimes even before her birth she belongs to the person who gave her mother away on the condition — a common clause in free marriage contracts — that the first girl she bears will be given in marriage by her grandfather. Or the woman may belong to her father's master, and this may be her father's only remaining obligation toward the man who formerly owned him as a slave. Thus, nearly all girls born in Koupéla belong by right to the naba, for the inhabitants of this locality were formerly his slaves. Sometimes a

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FA28 Mossi FA28

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13. *Economic Change and Mossi Acculturation*

Some five thousand Mossi from the kingdom of Yatenga in the Upper Volta have been resettled on the newly developed lands of the Niger Irrigation Project in the French Sudan. Removed from a cultural setting which has been relatively undisturbed by the influence of European civilization, they are required to adapt themselves rapidly to an economic situation structured and directed by Europeans. Economic organization being the variable involved, a study of their adjustment provides an opportunity to examine some of the cultural problems and processes related to economic development in underdeveloped areas.

Yatenga is the northernmost of four Mossi kingdoms located in the Upper Volta. It is a sub-Saharan savanna land of red earth, low rainfall, gently rolling plains, and low hills. Ouahigouya, the capital, gives its name to the French administrative unit, the Cercle de Ouahigouya, which has governed the kingdom from its headquarters in this ancient city since its conquest in 1895.[1]

To distinguish themselves from the people of the neighboring kingdoms of Ouagadougou, Fada-N'Gourma, and Tenkodogo, the Mossi of the Yatenga sometimes speak of themselves as "Yadise" (those of Yadiga). This name refers to the fact that they regard themselves as being descended, as a nation, from Naba Yadiga, the half-mythical warrior-prince from Ouagadougou who broke away from his father's dynasty to form the separate political entity, Yatenga, which bears his name (*ya* for "Yadiga" and *tenga* for "country"). The Mossi have not always been numerically and culturally dominant in the Yatenga, as they are today. They recognize that their ancestors came from the south, from Mamprusi and Dagomba in the northern territories of Ghana.

Highly organized politico-religious states representing the cultural amalgamation of native and foreign populations and institutions are characteristic of the Voltaic region of West Africa. Acknowledging that we "owe to Rattray the discovery that these central Voltaic tribes are

[1] Capitaine Noire, *Monographie du Cercle de Ouahigouya* (Ouahigouya, 1904), p. 15.

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FA28 Mossi FA28

their continued reliance upon his political power and intercession with his noble ancestors, in order that the village may enjoy peace through the coming months of the dry season and early rains at the beginning of the next economic cycle.

With this observance all of the sources of power—both social and supernatural—upon which the Mossis' well-being is dependent have been thanked for their support throughout the year just ended and have been encouraged, by the generosity of their supplicants, to continue their benevolence for the year to come. The Mossi understand the nature of these forces and the manner in which they can be controlled. They know them as manifestations of a deity who will reward their observance of ceremonial obligations with the soft winds and heavy rains that bring a rich harvest. The individual is intellectually and emotionally absorbed in maintaining a balance in his relationship to a world he understands. His efforts to maintain this balance are occasionally frustrated by sorcery or the contrary will of his deity, but he enjoys, nonetheless, a very real security.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENTS AT THE NIGER IRRIGATION PROJECT

Given the nature of these interrelationships between the organization of economic activity and the social and religious institutions of their culture, the adjustment of the Mossi who have been resettled at the Niger Irrigation Project has implications which go beyond mere technological adaptation. The settlers must, in fact, adjust to a totally changed cultural setting.

Arriving at the Niger project, they fail to find the institutions upon which they have always depended for their security; they find instead a natural environment governed by forces they do not know. Their water supply is no longer dependent on the supernatural controls of the earth custodians but comes from a dam built by Europeans. They are socially isolated from their kinsmen and their ancestral spirits in the Yatenga, and they derive little comfort from the presence of fellow Mossi with whom they have neither consanguineal nor affinal relationship.

Settlers were forcibly recruited for the Niger Irrigation Project until 1944, when forced labor was abolished throughout the French Union. Now a recruitment program brings Mossi families to the project each year; every family head receives a house, oxen, a plow, and a plot of land proportionate to the number of active workers accompanying him. Under the supervision of European agronomists, they apply modern methods to the production of rice and cotton. The project administration buys their crop for cash after deducting costs for seed, irrigation, mechanized cultivation, transportation, and processing. In theory, ten years of

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

debt-free cultivation entitle the settler to permanent residence on the land he has been loaned.

Adaptation to the conditions of the new geographical setting in which the Mossi find themselves has been relatively rapid and easy. The Yatenga and the Niger project lie within the same climatic zone; the only important ecological difference between the two areas is the increased water supply resulting from irrigation. This change in the origin of the water supply, control of which provides a basic sanction of Mossi religion, was less disturbing to traditional belief than might have been anticipated.

Rather than diminishing their belief in their own religion, it only convinces the Mossi colonists that the forces of the natural order are different in their new habitat and accordingly must be controlled in a different way. Finding the indigenous inhabitants of the French Sudan, the Bambara, to be zealous Moslems, the Mossi settlers have accepted Islam as the religion of their new country. Confident that their religious obligations in the Yatenga will be taken care of by the elders who have remained behind, and with some pressure from those who have already become Moslemized, new arrivals rapidly embrace Islam as the system by which the supernatural forces governing their new environment can be manipulated.

Their acceptance of Islam has been as superficial as it has been rapid. There is time neither for the study of Moslem theology nor for the soul-searching which must precede the rejection of previously held religious beliefs. With a tradition which emphasizes the observance of religious form rather than intense emotional participation in ceremonial, their observance of the five daily prayers, taking of a Moslem name, deference to the marabout, and casual attention to certain dietary prohibitions should be viewed as their rational reaction to the fact of being in a strange land with an obviously different supernatural order which must be dealt with in a new way. Desire for a measure of control over this new supernatural order, pressure for conformity to the religious norms of their new social setting, and—perhaps most significantly—the permissiveness which characterizes the West African's acceptance of the existence of new supernatural forces, makes Islamization possible without the rejection of previously held religious ideas or practices.

In contrast to the relative ease of their adaptation to the natural and supernatural aspects of their new environment, their adjustment to the social situations which result from the change in economic organization has been most difficult. They must, of course, learn a new technology: the cultivation of rice and cotton by modern methods. Since the machines used for clearing the land and for the harvest are operated by

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

177 specially trained non-Mossi personnel, the use of irrigation, fertilizer,
241 and the plow are their most important technological innovations. Despite their difficulty in communicating with the European agronomists under whose direction they work, they soon master these agricultural techniques. Patterns of consumption are also altered, rice taking the
[261] place of millet as the staple in their diet. After some initial illness they become accustomed to rice but suspect that it is less nourishing than their traditional diet.

177 Far more difficult than adjusting to either the new technology or the diet is adaptation to the changed social organization. Trying to ease this
182 adjustment but with an imperfect understanding of traditional Mossi institutions, the project administration has tried to re-create their forms in the area of resettlement.

Despite this, the new colonist finds himself isolated among social forces he does not understand. The attempt to reproduce the traditional pattern of residential grouping is meaningless in the absence of the lineage. Separated from his kinsmen and his community, the colonist is confused by social institutions whose resemblance to those he has known in the Yatenga exists only on the level of form. He does not like or understand being housed with strangers as if they were his kinsmen. Equally incomprehensible is an approximation of the familiar political organization which, ignoring the traditional sanctions of chieftainship, has a former earth custodian, whose supernatural role has traditionally precluded the exercise of political authority, as paramount chief.

Despite the efforts of the European administration to reproduce their structural appearance, the institutions of Mossi society are so interrelated that the change in the organization of economic activity has created new needs which make alterations in traditional institutions inevitable. Rather than permitting the colonists to modify their indigenous social organization to fit these new needs, the social structure rigidly imposed by the Europeans has impeded the Mossi in their efforts to adjust their institutions to the changed situation. The delegation of authority to inept administrative appointees thinly disguised as chiefs and to the older, least adaptive members of the settler communities only complicates the problem of adjustment.

Isolated from their kinsmen and the protection of their ancestral spirits, the colonists miss the emotional and social satisfactions of extended family living as well as the security of an established position in the community in which they were born. Adherence to the traditional kinship organization, with its emphasis on obedience to the elders who
[582] have remained behind in the Yatenga, makes marriage at the Niger project almost impossible.

The young men born and raised at the project resent the tradition

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

which requires sharing and compliance with the authority of kinsmen in the Yatenga whom they have never known. Forced to return to the Yatenga to assist the extended family there, they are frustrated in their efforts to form a permanent identification with their residence at the irrigation project. More efficient than their elders in communicating with the Europeans and in learning their techniques, they are thwarted by a social organization which denies expression to their initiative. The older men, given no share in the administration of the project and with little understanding of its objectives, believe that they are being exploited by the Europeans and that they would be more successful if they were to follow their own system of production and marketing.

The Mossi have learned that the official policy of the Niger Irrigation Project specifies their participation in administration through "indigenous agricultural associations," and even through their "collaboration" within the board of directors; but they do not actually participate in either of these. Possibly the fact that the Mossi have had no previous experience of participation in democratic forms discouraged the Europeans in their early efforts to include them in the administration of the project, but such participation implies a profound cultural adjustment and would require patience on the part of the Europeans. Whatever the case, the fact that the colonists know they have a right to participate in the administration and yet are denied it only serves to increase their conviction that they are being exploited.

Unsure of their rights to the land, unaware of the goals of the project, and inhibited by their artificially maintained tradition from forming meaningful social relationships in the area of resettlement, the Mossi make little permanent identification with the Niger project and its objectives. They say that it is like the hut a man builds in his fields during the rainy season; when the crop is harvested, he will return to the house of his fathers.

The relatively rapid and easy adaptation to the new natural setting and the supernatural forces which govern it is probably due both to the lack of European interference in this aspect of the colonists' lives and to the traditional permissiveness of West African religions. On the other hand, the greatest obstacle to adjustment seems to be just that aspect of the changed situation which was designed to facilitate it: the reconstruction and artificial maintenance of a social structure which cannot be efficiently integrated with the new economic organization. This structure has been maintained with such rigidity that it actually impedes Mossi efforts to reinterpret their institutions in terms of their new situation.

The Mossi who have returned from the Niger project have had little effect on their kinsmen in the Yatenga. Islamized colonists are often

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

too young to be listened to seriously by their elders. If they are returning as senior members of their lineages, and since their power and prestige are dependent on the maintenance of the socio-religious status quo, they are unlikely to be innovators. For these same reasons the few changes in the social organization which have occurred at the Niger project have had little effect on the social environment of the Yatenga.

Most of the agricultural techniques acquired in the Sudan are useless in the Yatenga because of the absence of irrigation. Even were this not so, the rationale of the modern agricultural methods employed at the Niger project is not explained to the settlers; they are required to follow the instructions of the European agronomists or be penalized. As a result, the improved agricultural techniques of the Europeans are regarded as just another of the white man's incomprehensible ways and are quickly forgotten.

The response of the Mossi to resettlement at the Niger Irrigation Project shows that in a situation of rapid cultural change, retentions or changes on the superficial level of form are misleading; nor is a brief statement of the functional interrelationship between institutions sufficient. The final reality of an institution lies in its meaning for the members of the society in which it exists, and its final evaluation must be based on its capacity to fulfil the changing needs of individuals. This concept is essential to an understanding of the colonists' dissatisfaction with the effort of the Niger project administration to reproduce artificially a static model of their traditional social structure. This can also be seen in their reaction to a changed supernatural order; an analysis which failed to descend beneath the level of form would miss the significant fact that their psychological response to religion and the basic premises of their theology have remained unaffected by an "Islamization" which amounts to little more than adopting certain new propitiatory usages.

Apparently not understanding the interrelationship of cultural institutions and the sanctions which give them meaning, the administration of the Niger Irrigation Project sought to modify the Mossi organization of economic activity without referring to the traditional values to which it is vitally related. Seeming to regard the indigenous culture as little more than a compendium of savage rites upon which superior European usages need only be imposed in order to prevail, such an approach reveals a failure to comprehend both the complexity and the tenacity of the Mossi cultural heritage.

2444 All Mossi grow ozonifie. They like it, but do not cultivate it in large quantities. It has to be planted in damp places. Some people plant it in the bush, others in the villages, but always near a spot where there is water.

[184] /475/ The Mossi hardly grow any yams (nioua or niouya in Mossi, pia in Nounouma, kou in Mandé). The southern Mossi alone cultivate it, and very little at that, in Kombisiguiri for example.

Here yams are sown in November along watercourses. Earth mounds 50 centimeters high and correspondingly wide are built with the ouaka. Then holes are made with a stick at the top of these little pyramids. Yam slices are cut, buried in these holes, and covered with earth. Then a prop is driven into the ground. The stem of the yam plant emerges from the ground and climbs along the prop. Seven months are required for the root, the yam itself, to reach its proper thickness and ripeness. During the month of April, therefore, a certain number of yams are dug out of the ground with the ouaka. The greatest number are left there, however, the soil is replaced, and the major harvest, the total harvest, is only taken in November, that is to say, a year after sowing.

[252] To eat yams, one cuts them into pieces and boils them in water.

[177] As for manioc (boumboro in Nounouma), it was unknown to the Mossi until the arrival of the French. The latter brought a few stalks, but the natives do not cultivate it as yet.

As far as diabéré is concerned (kousoubadé in Mossi, diabéré in Mandé), the Mossi grow a little of it. It is sown at the time of the first rains in the fields of maize or large red millet, that is to say, around the soukala. Holes are made with the koutiaga, and small tubercles are placed within them. The plant is harvested one month after maize, that is, in September.

In Mossi territory, it is cultivated chiefly by the Yarsé, for example those of Rakaye and Saraboutenga.

The Mossi themselves cultivate it little, and the same applies to the Bambara. The Gourounsi and Boussansé do not grow it at all.

[253] The diabéré is cooked in water, peeled, and eaten as it is.

According to Guebhardt (Au Gouta-Djallon /In the Fouta Djallon/, 1910), the diabéré (the Poullo /Fulani/ name) is really taro (Caladium antiquorum or esculentum).

231 While the Mossi entrust their cattle to the Foulbé, as we have seen earlier, they do no such thing with their sheep which are kept with the goats. They are handed over to the young boys to care for during the winter and the dry season.

231 262 As almost everywhere in West Africa, the flesh of the sheep is of mediocre quality and smells of suint. The natives nevertheless like it very much.

231 The sheep have short hair and yield no wool. Actually, in all of West Africa, only the Macina sheep yield some.

"The Mossi sheep," says the Cahier des Rapports of the /Ouagadougou/ circle, "differs basically from the Macina sheep. While the latter are rather large, with very thick hair, the Ouagadougou sheep are small with short hair. The males have horns, and usually long manes.

"The sheep race of the Macina does not in fact exist among the Mossi, for the climate of the region does not permit it. In the northern part of the circle one may find, though rarely, some sheep belonging to that breed brought by the Dioula and destined for slaughter, but nowhere is that race raised /among the Mossi/.

"Although the Mossi sheep cannot be exploited in any way as far as their hair is concerned, they nevertheless constitute a source of income of some importance to the natives. /490/ Sheep are indeed quite numerous throughout the circle. They are chiefly consumed locally. A few flocks, however, are led to the markets of the Gold Coast."

[777] Let us note further the existence of so-called "house sheep," raised individually in the household in accordance with a custom introduced among the Mossi by the Yarsé, and fattened carefully to be slaughtered on festive occasions.

Goats are not entrusted to the Foulbé either, and the latter, incidentally, would not want them. During the winter season, they are herded by children who prevent them from eating the millet. During the dry season they are not herded, and they may wander about as they please.

The majority of Mossi goats are of dwarf species. Yet goats of usual size, large goats which are no doubt of Maure /Moorish/ origin, are also to be found in small numbers.

386 There are dyers as well as weavers and tailors among the Mossi.
●177 "Dyer" is garalosadaba in Mossi, from gara, "indigo" and sadaba, "maker." There are no dyers in the southern part of Mossi territory but only in the north, from Ouagadougou upward. This would tend to prove that just as the Mossi probably learned cotton weaving from the Yarsé, they must have learned the dyer's craft from the Songhay, with whom they have had contact toward the north. Actually, Songhay emigrants have established villages in the northern part of the Ouagadougou circle, and the dyer's craft is their chief industry. This strongly corroborates our theory. Let us add that /535/ the Mossi practice dyeing in certain places, at certain spots, so to speak. One may not find a single dyer in a large number of Mossi villages, and then all at once come upon a locality with thirty dyers' wells, such as Yakki for example.

386 To present a Ouagadougou dyer, here is a Mossi by the name
249 of Gomdounguiba Nangakoré. He does not himself cultivate indigo. He buys it at market in loaves or balls. Anyone may grow indigo among the Mossi (see the section on cultivation above). When it is ripe, the leaves are gathered, heaped in a wooden gourd, and
[425] pressed to make loaves worth 50, 100, or 500 cowries. The dyer buys the loaves at market.

386 He dyes either cotton threads or strips, or even garments (cloaks, etc.). The item to be dyed is brought to him. In short, he usually does custom work.

Sometimes, nevertheless, he buys thread, strips, cloaks, or skirts, dyes them, and has them sold at market by his wife or wives.

Every dyer sinks a dyeing well outside, but right beside, his soukala. He makes a neatly squared hole, quadrangular, about 60 centimeters long by 60 wide and 1 meter deep. This hole is tamped carefully several times, and the clay walls are polished with water prepared with néré bark. Finally, water is poured in to see whether it is watertight. About three days are needed to make one of those wells. Every dyer has one.

In order to dye thread, strips or garments, millet-stalk ashes are placed in water, strained, and tossed to the bottom of the dyeing hole. Then come the ashes of a tree called gouara by the Mossi (the ashes themselves are called zato or iato). They are laid

9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1960 FA28 Mossi FA28

with the Moro Naba and his chiefs. The Mossi commoner who became Minister of the Interior in the Mendes-France government received the treatment fitting to his rank from French officials in Africa, but he bowed humbly and paid homage to the Moro Naba when he visited Wagadougou. In return he still receives political support from the traditional Mossi hierarchy. Whether or not this man and the other Mossi politicians of commoner origin will continue to honor and respect the chiefs in order to obtain their support is not known. It is possible that this situation will change if the growing number of urban Mossi and some of their rural fellows attack the position of the chiefs. But for the foreseeable future it appears as though the traditional dynasty will remain in power, and may even extend its power at the expense of the other non-Mossi groups who are now members of the Voltaic Republic.

The apparent success of the ancient political dynasty of the Mossi people to adapt itself to the requirements of the modern world shows the ability of African institutions to adjust novelty with tradition. It confirms what the anthropologists have always known, that Africa was not a *tabla rasa* on which conquerors could easily impose their ideas and institutions. The cultures of Africa were meaningful to its peoples and when they could not be maintained, they were reinterpreted to meet new situations.[9] It is quite true that because of historical reasons the Mossi did not come into as intensive contact with Europeans as did their neighbors to the south, and that this is possibly why their institutions have persisted. However, the experience of Ghana should make us pause before accepting such a facile answer. A British type of Parliamentary system was imposed upon that country, but it is changing so rapidly that one wonders whether it should have been imposed in the first place. It is still too early to tell what the Ghanaian and other modern African governments will look like; but one might speculate that within the bounds set by the exigencies of the modern world, these governments may resemble the traditional African ones much more than those of their ephemeral conquerors.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. According to C. K. Meek, among the Jukun "The King's demise was and is kept a close secret, and is not, in fact revealed until some months afterwards, when the body is formally buried. Various reasons are assigned for this secrecy, such as that

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

who did live at the palace, only a small minority prepared the ruler's meals and shared his bed. Dim Delobson reports that Mogho Naba Kom II (1905–42) had thirty-seven wives. His son, Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–57), had twenty.[34] The present Mogho Naba, Kougri, recently married according to Western tradition and is officially monogamous.[35] There seems to be a general trend toward fewer wives among Mossi chiefs.

Mossi rulers never married for the purpose of forming state alliances, and their marriages had no political significance. The Mogho Naba's marriages were exogamous with regard to the royal lineage and to his mother's minimal lineage. Aside from these restrictions, however, the Mogho Naba could marry women from any Mossi lineage or group, including serfs, slaves, and foreign populations. It is said that when Mogho Naba Sanum (1850–90) despaired of having an heir by a Mossi woman, he took a Fulani wife.[36]

The Mogho Naba had no formal wedding ceremony. The task of introducing a new wife to the royal harem fell to the Pughtiema. She and her assistants welcomed the wife in a prescribed fashion. First they shaved all the hair from her body. They then bathed her in warm water to which shea butter and ritual herbs had been added, and during the bath they recited the ruler's genealogy to impress her with her new status.[37] The Pughtiema advised her on the need for proper deportment, and warned her that adultery was punished by death. To close the ceremony, a smith fastened to the girl's wrists and ankles the silver or brass bracelets that identified her as a wife of the Mogho Naba. If the bride was still a child, she was often allowed to return to her father's house until she reached childbearing age. If she was past the age of puberty, her marriage was consummated without further ceremony, and she joined the ranks of the ruler's wives.

The wives who lived in the palace were divided into three groups. The first group included the wives who lived with the Pughtiema in a section of the palace harem called the *zaka sanga* ("large courtyard"). These women were all past childbearing age and no longer received nocturnal visits from the Mogho Naba. They had their own fields in the vicinity of the palace and cultivated them with the aid of the samande kamba, the pages they had adopted, and their own children. The women of the second group, those of the *zagbilin* ("small courtyard"), were mostly in their thirties or forties and still sexually active. They received occasional visits from the Mogho Naba, but fewer than his younger wives. These women also cultivated their fields with the help of the young men of the court.

The third group of wives, the *dogunba* ("keepers of the household"), was the most important. The dogunba prepared the ruler's meals and satis-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

3. Finally, a third lot, composed of young girls and young boys, was distributed among the warriors and put into their charge. The boys will be employed until further notice as grooms to the warriors; later on, those who prove themselves useful and docile will be kept. The others will be sold at the first opportunity. The girls will be given in marriage to warriors who distinguish themselves.[25]

The military campaigns of the Mossi, in contrast to their slave-raiding expeditions, appear to have been well organized. When the Mogho Naba felt that a war was necessary, he summoned his five provincial ministers and the Tansoba to a parley. If war was decided upon, the Tansoba was given full charge of all operations. This man, chosen from a hereditary clan of warriors who lived in a village called Tansob'tenga in Sapone district, was listed among the Mogho Naba's courtiers but seldom appeared at court unless war was imminent. His duties as chief warrior were considered so dangerous that he constantly sought out religious practitioners for supernatural aid. Nevertheless, a war minister who was good and brave was not expected to live very long. If he did live to become gray-haired, the other courtiers made fun of him by pretending that his graying head could only be the result of his having carried a sheep captured in warfare on his head as a present to the ruler.

Once given a mandate for war, the Tansoba collected his magico-religious apparatus and prepared the requisite sacrifices. He then asked the provincial ministers to notify the district chiefs to assemble with their warriors under the leadership of the local Tansobadamba, who were often members of the Tansoba clan. When the district chiefs received this notice, they beat their *zongagondo* (war drums), and the local administrators sent orders for men to the village chiefs. The village chiefs, in turn, beat their war drums to summon their noble cavalrymen and commoner foot soldiers, who came armed with bows and arrows, spears, swords, and clubs, with or without iron tips. The tips of the sharp weapons were often covered with a vegetable poison derived from a shrub of the Strophanthus species. Some of the men also carried guns after firearms were introduced among the Mossi from the desert region and from the coast. Many carried rawhide shields.

As soon as the village contingents had assembled and had gathered their provisions, they marched to the district centers. Then they proceeded either to the place of battle or to Ouagadougou. In the latter case, they became part of the royal army and were joined by the forces of those princes who were prepared to honor their obligation to the Mogho Naba. For example, when the French invaded Ouagadougou in 1896, the Boulsa Dim sent his prime minister "at the head of an army to aid Mogho Naba

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

The district chiefs did not often exercise their rights over fruit trees in the weogho, as the wasteland in their districts was called. If a villager went into the weogho and collected fruit or wood from the chief's trees, he surrendered only part of it to the chief. On the other hand, if he received permission from a district chief to farm in the weogho, he was obliged to gather and send to the chief the fruit on any valuable trees. A district chief sometimes granted the rights over certain fruit trees in the inhabited areas to specific families or individuals, for personal reasons or as a reward for services. In such cases, the chief forfeited his rights to these trees, but retained his rights to the others.[55]

District chiefs also controlled all the resources of creeks and pools within their jurisdiction that were not sacred to certain aboriginal families, or which had not been transferred to specific persons. The aboriginal Ninisi families always notified the district chief when they planned to perform their annual fishing rite to the earth deities. He, in turn, sent representatives to the ceremony, and they were given part of the catch as his share. Persons who were granted permission to fish in the chief's water holes gave him a substantial part of their catch, and even those persons who had private control of fishing places regularly did the same.

The district chiefs also had rights to certain parts of animals caught in their territories. This applied especially to animals caught with such traditional weapons as traps, clubs, bows and arrows, and spears. Men who had obtained flint guns and other firearms from the Ashanti or elsewhere and who had bought their own powder were not obliged to give the chief a part of their game, but it was always prudent to do so. According to a long-standing tradition, the tusk and legs of a slain elephant that were not resting on the ground belonged to the chief, and those that lay on the ground belonged to the Tengsoba in whose ritual jurisdiction the animal had been slain. But the district chief's secular power was so much stronger than the Tengsoba's sacred power that he usually took both tusks, leaving the Tengsoba only two legs. The district chief also received other portions of elephants and parts of all the larger animals killed in his territory. And when hunters in the district were successful in the chase, they usually gave him entire small animals.

Every village in a district contributed to the district chief's revenue by performing special services for him. Certain villages were responsible for keeping specific huts in his compound in good condition; others, whose lands bordered on the woods, had to provide firewood for his compound; and yet others furnished grass and other fodder for his horses. Many villages had the task of cultivating special fields and crops for the district chief.

pleted, the remainder of the ceremony followed the pattern of the Ouagadougou ritual.

During the weeks that followed, the village chiefs and the heads of the larger lineage segments all offered sacrifices to their ancestors. The Pughtiema of each prominent local administrator, chief, or lineage head prepared and poured the millet water as a libation to the ancestors. Whenever possible, each of these personages invited musicians to sing praises to his ancestors. He dressed in his best robe and sat outside his hut to receive presents from his relatives, friends, and subjects, along with their best wishes for the new year, and for long life and prosperity. In return he gave them kola nuts, beer, and food. Thus, in celebrating the Basgha, all the Mossi were united in prayers and supplications to the ancestors, upon whom rested the future of their country and the successful reign of the descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri.

The earth deity, Tenga, held the central place in the second major religio-political ceremony which linked all Mossi. This ritual, called *Tense* (from *tenga*, "earth") and sometimes *Naba Oubri ma koure* ("the anniversary of the funeral of Mogho Naba Oubri's mother"), was so important to Mossi cohesion that it was banned by the French, and as a result its main features are now unclear. According to tradition, Naba Oubri loved Poughtoenga, his Ninisi mother, so much, and was so pleased with the elaborate funeral he gave her, that he decided to repeat this ceremony each year in the hope that his subjects would be blessed with the bountiful crops and herds which had made the first one possible. Curiously enough, Oubri's mother was not a central figure in the Tense celebration.[8] Instead, great stress was placed on the fructifying powers of the earth and on the importance of the royal ancestors in Mossi life. The juxtaposition and association of the earth deity with Oubri's mother has important implications for the Mossi political organization. Mossi tradition holds that a Ninisi woman was the ancestress of the Mossi of Ouagadougou. Her people probably celebrated the Tense as a fertility rite to their earth goddess, Tenga. The Mossi apparently took over the ceremony and used it both as a fertility rite and as a memorial festival, thus symbolically uniting the conquerors and the conquered.[9]

In contrast to the Basgha, no special date appears to have been set for the celebration of the Tense. It was held sometime before the crops were sowed, but according to Tauxier it was not celebrated at all in Ouagadougou when the previous year's harvest had been poor.[6] Before setting the date for the festival, the Mogho Naba summoned the Larhalle Naba and ordered him to have sacrifices made on the graves of all former rulers. This minister

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

[P. 139]

IX

EUROPEAN CONTACT AND THE CONQUEST OF THE MOSSI

No one knows with any degree of certainty when the Mossi came to the attention of an expanding Western Europe. Marc reports that the ambassadors of John II of Portugal (1481-95) who visited Mali and Timbuktu heard about the Mossi and convinced the King on their return that the Mossi were Christians, and that the King attempted to establish contact with them.[1] Similarly, Barth tells us that around 1488,

> The Jolof [Wolof] Prince Bemoy came to Portugal and communicated so much information with regard to the nations of the interior of Africa, especially the Mossi, who, according to him, had much in common with the Christians, that he excited the greatest interest. It was supposed that the king of Mossi was the long-sought Prester John. Ogane is the native royal title of the king of Mossi. In consequence, from this time forward, numerous messengers were sent into the interior by King John from different quarters, and a nearer alliance seems to have been concluded with the king of the Mandingoes, although it was well understood in Portugal that the empire of the Mellians had fallen in ruin.[2]

Barth also states that as late as 1533, "The Portuguese endeavored also to open communication with the king of Mossi (el rey dos Moses), of whose power they had received reports, but from the wrong side, namely from Benin. The king of Mossi was then waging war with Mandi Mansa."[3] Unfortunately, no Mossi tradition reveals whether they had heard about the Portuguese at that time.

There are no authentic reports that Western Europeans tried to reach the Mossi until three centuries later. During the intervening period, the Europeans were so preoccupied with the gold- and slave-rich coastal African states and with their American and Asian colonies that they had little interest in the interior of the African continent. Only after the slave trade had been abolished and they were trying to find out about the interior of the Sudan in the hope of establishing trade relations there did the Europeans again hear about the Mossi.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

The Mossi were probably brought to the attention of modern Europe by T. E. Bowdich, an Englishman who went to Ashanti in 1817 to sign a trade agreement with the Asantehene. While at Kumasi, Bowdich diligently sought information about the lands in the interior, but was relatively unsuccessful because his hosts pleaded ignorance. Nevertheless, he did find out that "five journies [days] from Yngwa [Yendi] is Mosee, a warlike but less visited kingdom: it consists of many states, but the superior monarch is named Billa, and the capital Kookoopella."[4] This misinformation is interesting because it shows that Bowdich's respondent had precise information only about Koupela, a town located near the great caravan center of Poitenga. Similarly, the linguistic data reported by Bowdich are for Dagomba rather than Mossi.

Another Englishman, Joseph Dupuis, led a trade mission to Kumasi in 1819, and obtained data on the Mossi that are surprisingly accurate given the reluctance of middlemen traders to reveal commercial information. He reports that Ashanti traders "sometimes travel as far as Aughoa, the Magho, and to the east of Kasogho. Aughoa is distant from Coomassie twenty-five journies by the Salgha and Yandy Roads, which would give a distance of 360 British miles. Their object in frequenting this place is to collect that vegetable substance by the name of shea butter."[5] There is no doubt that "Aughoa" is really "Ouagha," the term often used by the Mossi to refer to their capital, and the distance between Kumasi and Ouagadougou as reported by Dupuis is approximately the same as the road mileage today. The name "Magho," which appears from time to time in these early documents, seems to be none other than "Mogho," the traditional name of Mossi country. "Kasogho" probably refers to the section of Ouagadougou that was controlled by the Kamsaogho Naba.

The Hausa merchants knew a great deal about the Mossi and the resources of their territory, but only with difficulty did the English trader Hugh Clapperton persuade Sultan Mohammed Bello of Sokoto to give him the following information:

> The country of Mouchier or Mouchi is situated to the west of Ghurma. It is vast and possesses a gold mine, rivers, forests, and mountains. It is inhabited by tribes of the Sudan who possess many fast horses and large donkeys. Their king is called Wagadougou; their asses are sent down to the Gond'ja to carry the drums of the Army.[6]

Either Clapperton or his informant obviously confused the capital of the Mossi with their king, and included parts of Dagomba in their territory.

Barth, who traveled extensively in the Sudan between 1849 and 1855, did

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

not enter Mossi territory. Nevertheless, he obtained rather precise information on the important caravan routes leading from Timbuktu through the Mossi trade centers of Ouagadougou, Kaya, Yako, and Koupela, down to Salaga and other towns in Ghana, and even across to Sansane Mango in Togoland. His data on the Mossi are invaluable:

> The whole triangle interposed between the Niger toward the north, and the country of the Eastern Mandingoes or Wangarawa toward the south, appears to be inhabited by a single race of people whose language, although they are divided into several states and nations, nevertheless appears originally to have been the same stock. It is very probable that this race in ancient times occupied the whole upper course of the Niger, and that this tract may have been wrested from it in later times by the Songhai and the Mandingoes, especially that section of the latter which is generally called Bambara. These are the Gourma toward the N.E., the Tombo toward the N.W., and between them the Mossi. . . . The strongest among these pagan kingdoms five centuries ago, and even at the present moment, is that of the Mossi, although the country is split into a number of small principalities, almost totally independent of each other, and paying only some slight homage to the ruler of the principality of Woghodogo.[7]

Europe learned more about the Mossi from Sigismund Koelle, who visited Sierra Leone in 1854. His informant was one Andrew Dixon, who had lived in Koupela before being captured and sold into slavery. He furnished information on the location of the Mossi, their wars with the Busansi, and their important commercial and political relations with the Ashanti.[8] Koelle's report, taken in conjunction with the reports of Dupuis, Bowdich, Clapperton, and Barth, shows that the Ashanti, like the Hausa and other coastal peoples, were protecting their trade when they attempted to isolate the peoples of the interior from the Europeans. But as soon as the British defeated the Ashanti in the war of 1873–74, the Sudan was opened and adventurers poured in. In 1877 and 1878, two missionaries of the Basel Mission visited the northern regions of Ghana, and subsequently gave a good description of Mossi commerce in that area.[9] Lonsdale, who visited Salaga in 1881, found among the traders in the market "the Mossi with his cattle, sheep, and slaves—these latter, generally Gurunsi, are not exposed for sale in the street or market, but can be seen where the owner resides."[10]

The activities of the various European nations in West Africa and other regions at this time led to military and diplomatic difficulties, which the Berlin Conference of 1884–85 was convened to resolve. Agreement was reached to assign "spheres of influence" to the various European nations, to regulate trade, and to provide for arbitration between rival claimants of conquered or "protected" territories. In West Africa, this meant the end

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

of the long Mossi isolation from European activity. In 1886, a German by the name of Krause became the first European to enter Ouagadougou. He left German-controlled Togoland and joined a caravan at Salaga in July 1886 with a load of kola nuts destined for Timbuktu. He arrived in the Mossi district of Bere sometime in August, and remained there long enough to observe that although this was the period of cultivation, there was a severe food shortage. The caravan proceeded to Ouagadougou and remained there until October, when it continued northward.[11] Krause reports that the journey through the Yatenga and Bandiagara region was uneventful, but that shortly after the caravan left Douentza, in December, he received word from the Mogho Naba to return to Ouagadougou immediately. Afraid to disobey, he returned to Ouagadougou in January 1887, tarried there for about two weeks, and then returned to the Gold Coast. Krause gives only a brief topographic description of Mossi country, and says little about the people and their society.[12] His visit might even be doubted, had Binger not visited Ouagadougou the following year and met the person at whose house Krause had lived.

In 1888 Binger left the French colony of Senegal with the sole purpose of reaching the Mossi and placing their country under the "protection" of France if this proved feasible. In many of the towns he passed through on his way to Mossi country, he encountered Mossi men trading slaves, salt, and kola nuts.[13] He also met a future Mossi ruler, Boukary Koutou, who was then in exile at Banema on the outskirts of the territory of Ouagadougou. Binger thought well of this prince, and described him as having "an honest countenance. His whole appearance denotes intelligence. He seems to be a just man, but firm in his resolutions."[14] Binger got better treatment from Boukary Koutou than he had from any other African ruler. He writes:

> Boukary Naba . . . treated me with plenty of good will, and had edibles and meat sent to me every day. . . . It is a great pity that I did not find Boukary Naba in power upon my arrival in Mossi country. It certainly would have facilitated my journey toward the Niger, and if he ever accedes to the throne, he will help with all the means at his disposal the European traveler who happens to pass through his country. This man has fine ideas; he loves progress, and will be well disposed to hear the counsel of the white man. Although his intelligence is higher than the average among blacks, he considers himself quite inferior to the European.[15]

Boukary Koutou further endeared himself to Binger by providing him with an escort so that he might reach the capital safely.

In contrast, Binger was not impressed with Mogho Naba Sanum. He

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

lamented the fact that when Mogho Naba Koutou died in 1850, the youthful Boukary Koutou had not been able to defeat his brother in the struggle for power. He voiced his disappointment with the town of Ouagadougou:

> I expected to find something better than the ordinary royal residence in the Sudan, because everywhere I went people bragged to me about the riches of the chief and the number of his wives and eunuchs. I did not have to wait long to find out the true state of affairs, because that very evening I found that what was acknowledged as a palace and seraglio was nothing but a group of miserable huts surrounded by heaps of filth, and a group of straw huts which served as stables and lodgings for captives and *griots* [bards]. In the courtyard were cows, sheep, and donkeys, which had been brought that day as presents for the king, but which had not yet been presented to him.[16]

Binger did say that Sanum had treated him well and had allowed him to remain at Ouagadougou for over a month, but he was angered when the ruler refused to let him pass through Yatenga (which he claimed as part of his realm) to go to Timbuktu. Nor would Sanum consider his request to place the Mossi under French protection. Finally, Sanum sent him a message ordering him to leave the capital immediately. Binger asked the reason for this summary dismissal, and was informed that the Mogho Naba believed that he was an advance guard for Europeans who were coming from the south, and that he did not show sufficient respect for the ruler. Binger scoffed at the first charge, but later found out that a German column under Von François was indeed heading for the Mossi. He violently rejected the charge of disrespect. He states:

> I feel that a white man traveling in this country, whoever he may be, should not prostrate himself before a black king, however powerful the latter may be. It is necessary that a white man should inspire respect and consideration wherever he goes; for if the Europeans should ever come here, they should come as masters, as the superior class of the society, and not have to bow their heads before indigenous chiefs to whom they are definitely superior in all respects.[17]

Despite these personal sentiments, Binger was compelled to leave Ouagadougou. He stopped briefly to visit his friend Boukary Koutou, and proceeded to the Gold Coast.

For some reason, Von François and his expedition never reached Mossi country. He left Togoland in February 1888 with a sizable force, intending to establish German rule in the Niger bend area, but turned back at Surma on the Mossi border.[18] He was soon followed by numerous British missions from the Gold Coast, German missions from Togoland, and French missions from Dahomey and the Sudan. Marc stated: "The three-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

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laborers.[3] In desperation, the French sought help from those very chiefs whose power they wished to curb, especially from the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, whom they regarded as the supreme ruler of the Mossi. However, they met with the same resistance:

> The king of the Mossi, Kouka Naba [Mogho Naba Sighiri], is lavish with vows of devotion and fidelity, but these vows are never translated into action. It is impossible to obtain from him any pertinent information about the country—he tries to give the impression that he knows nothing about it—or any information about Boukary Koutou [then in exile, but still a threat to the French], of whom he pretends to have no news.[4]

One cannot tell whether the Mogho Naba knew about Boukary Koutou's activities, but it is highly unlikely that he could have given the French much information about the country even if he had wished to do so. No Mogho Naba ever possessed this kind of information. The Dimdamba and the Kombemba paid allegiance and tribute to their superior ruler, but did not furnish him with specific data on their principalities and districts.

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The death of Mogho Naba Sighiri in 1905 enabled the French officials to secure the election of a Mogho Naba they could control and to change the Mossi political organization. Sighiri's principal heir was his sixteen-year-old son, Saidou Congo, who in the opinion of the Mossi electoral college "could not keep the country" because of his youth. The French, keenly aware that they could more easily control a young ruler, insisted that Saidou be given the nam, and he became Mogho Naba Kom. Two years later, in 1907, the French began to reorganize the kingdom of Ouagadougou and the surrounding territories. They suppressed certain districts and principalities, enlarged some, and unified others by granting them control over the smaller political entities that lay near or within their boundaries. These changes were often made without regard for the traditional hierarchies, and many district chiefs found themselves controlling other district chiefs, while Dimdamba were reduced to the level of district chiefs.

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The French also reorganized the provincial administration, replacing the five ministers with persons more favorably disposed toward their rule. The Larhalle Naba was replaced in 1908 after he had mysteriously left the capital for Koudougou. The Kamsaogho Naba was deposed by the Mogho Naba, and was replaced by a nominee of the French. As in the case of the district chiefs, the French shifted the territorial responsibilities of these ministers "without taking into consideration the hierarchy prevailing among [them]. The intention of the administration apparently was to reward certain young and capable ministers to the detriment of those who were old."[5] One commentator concludes: "In view of the youth of the

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

reigning king, Naba Kom, and also owing to certain difficulties, the administration was compelled to grant more authority to the five great ministers and to make them true provincial chiefs with whom it could deal and who would govern their territories directly."[6]

Some of the demoted chiefs and their followers opposed these changes. In 1910, they refused to pay taxes and fought the police. However, they were forced to accept the changes when the police burned their villages, seized their goods and animals to pay the taxes, and deposed uncooperative chiefs. These harsh measures so shocked the Mossi that they remained docile from that time onward, and thereafter the French were able to rule the country with one European administrator for every 60,000 Mossi.[7]

Once the French officials had put down the opposition to their policies of control and had succeeded in installing loyal provincial administrators, they sought to bring Mossi country into the political structure they were creating in West Africa. In 1895, they had installed a Governor-General at Dakar to represent the French Government in the territories of Senegal, the French Sudan, French Guinea, and the Ivory Coast. With the subsequent conquest of Mossi country and other areas, however, this arrangement became obsolete, and a decree was passed in October 1899, dividing the French Sudan in two. One half was attached to the coastal colonies. The other half was combined with the Voltaic region (which included Mossi country), declared a military territory, and placed under the direct control of the Governor-General. In 1900 Niger was also made into a military territory, and two years later, by a decree of October 1902, a new territory called Sénégambie-Niger was set up which included Mossi country. This new arrangement lasted only two years. It was superseded by a decree of October 1904 dismembering Sénégambie-Niger and creating, among others, a territory called Haut-Sénégal et Niger, which included Mossi country. This new colony was similar to the others in that it had its own administration (at Bamako), its own budget, and a Lieutenant-Governor responsible to the Governor-General at Dakar. The territory was divided into administrative units called *cercles*, each with a commander responsible to the Lieutenant-Governor. Each cercle commander was assisted by adjutants who served in smaller units called *subdivisions* and *postes*. Mossi country itself was divided into three cercles: Ouagadougou (including Tenkodogo), Ouahigouya (including Yatenga), and Fada-N'-Gourma. This territorial change was the last to affect the Mossi until the end of World War I.[8]

The implementation of full colonial rule among the Mossi was to have a profound effect on their traditional political organization and on the

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

relationship between the people and their chiefs. One of the principal contributing factors was the demand of the French administration that Mossi country not only share in the over-all development of French West Africa, but pay for its own administration as well. The resources of Mossi country were largely limited to agricultural production and stock raising, however, and revenue from these activities was slight. The full weight of administrative expenses thus fell on the Mossi people. Apparently, the first taxation was of a collective nature, for according to the official government report for June 1899, "No regular tax has been levied, but taxes have been collected from the Mogho Naba and the other chiefs."[9]

Decrees of July and November, 1903, authorized "native chiefs to collect taxes, and granted them a commission on the tax yield to arouse their interest in the regular payment of taxes."[10] Accustomed as they were to giving taxes (gifts) to their rulers with the knowledge that subordinate chiefs would extract a share before sending the remainder up the hierarchy, the Mossi were not averse to paying taxes through their traditional rulers to the "new chiefs," the French administration. However, when taxes grew to excessive proportions and chiefs continued to get a percentage, the people accused their rulers of cheating them. The reasons for the Mossi complaints about taxation are described by Tauxier, himself an administrator:

> This tax, light at first, has grown rapidly over the last few years. In 1906 it was 311,000 francs for the territory of Ouagadougou, which had a population of 861,000 inhabitants. In 1907, the tax was raised to 360,000 francs; in 1909, to 555,000 francs; and in 1910, to 656,000 francs. Furthermore, from 1908 onward this tax was exacted with such rigor and on such short notice that it was exactly as though the amount had been tripled. Under the circumstances, the Mossi were compelled to resort to trade in order to obtain the French money they did not have, since the local currency is the cowry and the French administration does not wish to receive it. . . . To meet this difficult situation the Mossi now organize small caravans in the villages, and send the young men to Wanke to sell cattle, sheep, goats, asses, horses, and bolts of cotton. They bring back with them either French money or kola nuts.[11]

Many Mossi had a great deal of difficulty in securing French currency. Mangin, a White Father who arrived in Mossi country in 1904, writes:

> The Europeans who live among the Mossi, including all the riflemen and cercle guards, do not put into circulation a quarter of the five-franc pieces that are required each year from the natives. At first the Mossi were taken by surprise and had to give 10,000 or even 15,000 cowries to obtain this famous coin, this charm which was to free them from all difficulties with the white man. At the official rate of exchange this coin is worth 5,000 cowries.[12]

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

What Mangin referred to euphemistically as "difficulties with the white man" was, to the Mossi, rather drastic punishment for non-payment of taxes. If a man refused to pay his taxes, the Mossi chief was permitted to sequester his goods and sell them. If the man had neither the taxes nor the goods, the chief had to send him and his wife (or wives) to the administrative post to be punished. Sometimes, a man and his wife would be made to look at the sun from sunrise to sunset while intoning the prayer *Ouennam co mam ligidi* ("God, give me money"). Other times, a man would be made to run around the administrative post with his wife on his back; if he had several wives, he had to take each one in turn. Then his wife or wives had to carry him around. The Mossi claim that a man had to run around the post three times, and his wife four. This is probably an exaggeration, however, because the numbers 3 and 4 are symbolically associated with men and women, respectively.

A further source of difficulty for the Mossi chiefs, and one which became more serious as time went by, was that they were charged by the administration to recruit men for both labor and military service. Initially, the chiefs had to supply men to transport grain for the French-organized agricultural societies from one region to another; later, they were commanded to supply labor for private and public works. Labouret states:

> The initial recruitment, which took place in 1912, was carried out without any difficulty, thanks to the unexpected afflux of volunteers. This was not the case in subsequent years. The reason for this was that the credulous natives of these distant regions, lacking any contact with the world, believed that the Europeans were carrying off their most robust youths to sell them to the Men of the Sea [mythical cannibalistic beings].[13]

The Mossi were alarmed at the high rate of mortality among the young men who went away to work. They had a saying, *Nansara toumde di Mossi* ("White man's work eats [kills] people"), and resisted the recruiting attempts of their chiefs. There was, however, less opposition to recruitment for military service, owing in part to the Mossi tradition of warfare. Many Mossi youths served in France during World War I, and additional hundreds served in an African contingent recruited "by an administrator named d'Arboussier, and with the cooperation of the Mogho Naba, to take possession of northern Togoland."[14]

The manner in which the Mossi chiefs administered their territories before the First World War was conditioned by the colonial administrators even when it was not directly controlled by them. The Mogho Naba had gradually lost most of his power, and he had no authority to act without the specific authorization of the French. He retained most of his cere-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

monial activities, especially since they were considered interesting "feudal" anachronisms to be shown to visiting officials and travelers. He also retained the power to appoint district chiefs, but the French often vetoed men they disliked and suggested that other candidates be elected. He also lost all control over his provincial administrators. The administrative chain now extended from the cercle commanders, through the provincial ministers and district chiefs, down to the village chiefs. Many provincial ministers, out of loyalty to the traditional system, occasionally briefed the Mogho Naba on the policies the French had ordered them to carry out, and told him about the state of affairs in the districts. This was completely unofficial if not illegal, but it made little difference to the French.

One serious blow to the power of the Mossi chiefs, especially on the district level, was their loss of judicial autonomy. Mossi country was subjected to the Indigénat, a rather harsh code of law for new colonies, which was promulgated by a decree of September 1887. Under this code, administrators could hold summary trials and punish any Moaga, whether chief or commoner. In June 1905, the Mossi chiefs regained some of their judicial power when a supplementary decree established village, district, and cercle courts throughout Haut-Sénégal et Niger.[18] Mossi village chiefs regained their police powers and the right to reconcile disputes among their people, but their decisions could be appealed to a district court. The district chief heard appeals and judged civil and criminal cases, but in all deliberations he was aided by two assessors appointed by the Governor. His judgment could be appealed to a cercle court, which was presided over by a European, who was assisted by two Africans. They heard appeals and judged crimes for which the penalty could be no more than five years. Penalties handed down by this court could be appealed to the Supreme Court of the Federation of French West Africa in Dakar, which judged all major crimes.

Thus the Mossi chiefs did regain part of their judicial power; but because the decree of 1905 did not abolish the Indigénat, local French administrators could easily countermand this power. Moreover, some administrators, dissatisfied with the Mossi courts and possibly resentful at their own loss of judicial power, sent numerous complaints to Dakar about the incompetence of the chiefs and the injustices perpetrated by village and district courts. As a result, a decree of August 1912 abolished the judicial power of the Mossi and of all other African chiefs, and instructed them to refer all litigation to courts at the poste, subdivision, and cercle levels.[19]

During the period before the First World War, the Mossi chiefs lost not only their judicial power but also much of the economic and religious basis of their political power. The French administration abolished slavery

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

and serfdom, and discouraged the various corvées performed by the people for their chiefs on the ground that the chiefs gained sufficient income from tax commissions. What really undermined the economic position of the Mossi chiefs, however, was the abolition of the religio-political practices and ceremonies that provided the rulers with substantial income, while reinforcing the traditional political system. The French permitted Mossi chiefs to celebrate the Basgha, but abolished the Tense with its revenue-producing Soretasgho ritual on the ground that it exploited the local population. The Mossi chiefs could no longer authorize the Tengsoba-damba to appropriate sacrificial animals from the villages to propitiate capricious deities. But some chiefs, taking quite seriously the concept that they were the "fathers" of their people, and had been selected for the nam because of their ability to care for their subjects, provided these animals or covertly permitted their servants to seize them and turn them over to the Tengsobadamba.

At the end of World War I, the French administration tried to establish a new policy toward the Mossi chiefs, but new economic programs that were implemented at the same time rendered these plans ineffective and further undermined the old institutions. A new Governor-General of French West Africa, Joost Van Vollenhoven, strongly influenced by one of his predecessors, Merleau-Ponty, and by the policy of *association* between France and her colonies (a policy based on the idea that colonial policy should be determined by the geographic and ethnic characteristics and the level of social development of the regions involved), advocated respect for the chiefs and for strong traditional political systems. Van Vollenhoven stipulated that the chiefs should not be harried by administrators, subjected to corporal punishment, or legally prosecuted without the sanction of higher officials (cercle commanders and lieutenant-governors). They should be granted higher salaries and help for agricultural labor, and should be shown techniques for improving their material well-being. They should also be decorated more often with the Legion of Honor, in order to heighten their prestige and to demonstrate "French generosity." Their relatives should be educated, given prestige and remuneration, and permitted to retain some status.[17]

The colonial economic policy that was to subvert Van Vollenhoven's political concepts and adversely affect the Mossi chiefs was outlined by Albert Sarraut, the postwar French Colonial Minister, who drew up an ingenious plan (*La Mise en valeur des colonies françaises*) to foster the development of railroads, wharves, roads, plantations, and other enterprises in every colony.[18] In contrast to Van Vollenhoven, Sarraut believed that

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

economic development should take precedence over everything else in the colonies. The Mossi were to be directly affected by the policies of both Van Vollenhoven and Sarraut. The colony of Haut-Sénégal et Niger was suppressed in March 1919, and replaced by the new colony of Upper Volta, in which the Mossi were the chief ethnic group. Moreover, Ouagadougou was chosen as the administrative center of this new colony.[19]

The new Governor of the Upper Volta, Edouard Hesling, who arrived in Ouagadougou in November 1919, sympathized with Van Vollenhoven's views, but was even more interested in economic development. He was determined to transform Ouagadougou from a small town with an indigenous population of about 8,000 and some 76 European soldiers, merchants, and missionaries, into a capital worthy of a colony. Shortly after he arrived, he summoned the Mogho Naba and the traditional ministers and had them recruit some 2,000 salaried and unsalaried men to provide enough mud bricks and wooden beams to complete the construction of eleven administrative buildings before the rainy season began the following May.

Hesling and his administrators believed that the Upper Volta, a country "with such diverse products and such a dense population, could attain an exceptional level of development by acquiring those economic elements which ensure prosperity."[20] Cotton was one of those elements. They believed that the Upper Volta "can and should export thousands of tons as soon as an easy and economical way of shipping is established."[21] By 1925, Hesling had constructed 6,000 kilometers of roads in the Upper Volta, about one-eighth the entire road network of French West Africa. Travelers in the Upper Volta at this time wrote of "the enforced enthusiasm with which the natives, under M. E. Hesling, have thrown themselves into agricultural labor and in particular into the planting of cotton."[22]

The administration of the Upper Volta continued to furnish Mossi manpower for the development of the other colonies as well as for the colonial army. In 1922, it was asked to furnish "6,000 workers for the Thies-Kayes railway, renewable every six months; and under the same conditions to furnish 2,000 laborers to build the railways in the Ivory Coast. Similarly, with the consent of the chief administrator of the colony, it was possible to recruit a thousand workers in the regions of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso for private business in the Ivory Coast."[23] Londres, who visited the Upper Volta in the late 1920's, reports that Mossi country was known as "a 'reservoir' of manpower."[24] Burthe d'Annelet reports that during this same period, "The Minister of War [took] 45,000 men each year to compensate for the weakness of our metropolitan recruitment, and

to cut down the length of service of our draftees as much as possible."[25] The Governor of the Upper Volta made full use of the Mossi chiefs to develop the colony, and although some chiefs may have objected to the labor imposed on their subjects, others seemingly approved. In commenting upon cotton production in the Upper Volta, Ossendowski writes:

> Cotton is an artificial crop and one the value of which is not entirely clear to the natives. The chiefs with their superior intellect, seeing the profit to be obtained from the plantation of cotton, are continually enlarging the area of the fields, and resort to draft animals, ploughs, manures, and even partial irrigation of the fields; nevertheless, the great mass of the population submit rather unwillingly to those instructions of the administration which aim at the development of cotton cultivation in the colony.[26]

Delavignette's comment on the role of the chiefs in cotton production seems to indicate that they, like their subjects, had to conform to the desires of the French:

> [The French] lived at Ouagadougou in the shade of the great Nabas, and because [the latter] possessed servitors and were at the head of docile provinces, [the French] dignified by the name of "custom," and in any case adjudged convenient, this domestication of the peasants whereby they were forced to work in a common field under the authority of the village chief, and for a salary which was theoretically to be distributed among them afterwards. Sometimes cercle guards were stationed in these fields.[27]

The Governor carried out many of Van Vollenhoven's reforms concerning the Mossi chiefs, and instructed his district administrators to respect the chiefs and to seek their aid in governing the people. De Beauminy, an administrator in the Upper Volta, contrasts the old policy with the new:

> Not without reason, we followed the rule of regarding the great black chiefs as exploiters of their peoples, and this caused us to introduce and to maintain a policy aimed at reducing their authority. Later on we were compelled to abandon this policy in the face of discouraging results. During the past few years we have restored power and prestige to the Mogho Naba and to his vassals, the Mossi chiefs. They are now paid by us, and they administer their kingdoms and territories under our guidance and under the supervision of an extremely small European staff (one official for every 60,000 inhabitants). The rulers are now helping us to restore, on a newer and sounder basis, a political edifice which had once appeared to be on the point of collapse.[28]

An official report also stated that the Mossi chiefs

> understand that the time of their absolute power, and the privileges of their "medieval lordships," are fated to wear away gradually. Certainly, the main-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

tenance of their authority and prestige is indispensable, and the local administration is firmly resolved not only to preserve it but even to strengthen it. Henceforth, however, this authority and prestige will be upheld on the basis of principles and methods better suited to the new order of things which has been established.[29]

The administration tried to educate some of the sons of the chiefs "in order to attune them to progress and to the fundamental principles of our policy."[30] It encountered some resistance from chiefs who resented what they considered the "recruitment" of their children for education, and from other chiefs who were afraid that, if educated, their sons might be converted to Catholicism and thus would be unable to perform the traditional religio-political ceremonies. Nevertheless, one official states quite proudly that "Despite some resistance, the results obtained so far are encouraging and of such a nature as to allay our anxiety: 671 sons of chiefs are now attending our schools, among them 52 sons of provincial chiefs and 342 sons of district chiefs."[31] However, very few of these boys even learned French well enough to take part in the government of their society.

Hesling also made an effort to improve the material welfare of the Mossi chiefs. He felt that under the previous administration the chiefs had been "inadequately remunerated," and he considered this bad for their morale. He therefore increased the appropriation for the salaries of chiefs from 86,000 francs in the 1919 budget to 190,000 francs in the 1924 budget, and counted on their receiving an additional 163,260 francs from tax commissions during the year. The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, considered the emperor of the Mossi and judged loyal, efficient, and capable by the French, was granted a stipend of 25,000 francs, while the Yatenga Naba, considered his subordinate and judged less capable, was granted only 8,700 francs.[32] Only 276 chiefs out of a total of 497 in the territory received any stipend at all that year, because even an augmented budget was too small to provide funds for the lesser chiefs. These chiefs, in the words of one official, "were often inadequate or incapable, but . . . could not be replaced, either because they had no qualified successors or because the traditional system placed an obstacle in the way."[33] Instead of salaries, they received seeds of new plant species such as mangoes, and they were helped in building dams to irrigate their fields and in sinking deep wells near their compounds. In addition to these material rewards, the Governor increased the prestige of the chiefs by giving them medals and honors.

Despite these increased salaries and honors, and the more important role they now played in the administration of their subjects, the Mossi

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

chiefs did not regain any of their traditional power. They remained auxiliaries of the administration. Taking Mogho Naba Kom as an example, one report states that this "simple, intelligent, compliant man served as news agent and made himself useful to the political administration" until the arrival of Hesling, when he took a livelier interest in the affairs of the colony.[34] Another source says of the same monarch:

> Free of the ancestral traditions that forbade him to leave his palace, and curious about progress and administration, he travels on all the roads and, under our supervision, busies himself with the settlement of administrative problems, to which he lends the weight of his authority. He makes the proposals for the nomination of province and district chiefs; he encourages his subjects to work and produce. Finally, he fulfills with the greatest dignity the representative functions that devolve upon him at his palace and in the official ceremonies.[35]

While it is true that the Mogho Naba made proposals for the nomination of chiefs, he was powerless to prevent their dismissal if they incurred the displeasure of the administration—a frequent occurrence during the Hesling period. For example, when the administration deposed Naba Boulga of Doulougou district for "incompetence" and placed him in "enforced residence" in a neighboring district, the French officials encouraged the election of Bila Kongo primarily because he was a former cercle guard. Bila Kongo was assassinated in 1924, and the Mogho Naba named Mahama Ouedraogo to take his place. This new chief soon had difficulties with the administration, however, and was deposed for exacting unauthorized taxes from his subjects and for abusing his authority. Mogho Naba Kom then appointed Ousmane Ouedraogo, but he was deposed for "incompetence" and exiled to Sao district.

On the other hand, Hesling made few attempts to change the traditional political and administrative structures of the Mossi. One contemporary source says:

> Since its inception the Government of the Upper Volta has made no changes or innovations, or at best very few, in this connection. The native administrative entities in the cercles of Ouagadougou, Ouahigouya, Kaya, and Fada-N'Gourma have remained the same as those which Haut-Sénégal et Niger transferred to the colony in 1919. . . . Only in 1922 did the cercle of Koudougou have its "Gurunsi" districts separated from its "Mossi" districts to form a new province, which was placed under the command of the Leo Naba, a chief of the same Gurunsi race. Tenkodogo, a cercle made up of a large number of small districts ruled by thoroughly inept chiefs, has been the object of a partial internal reorganization since the beginning of 1923. The number of its native *circonscriptions* [districts] has been reduced from 82 to 73.[36]

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre- World War I Period]

These were minor changes indeed, but they truncated the power of the Mossi chiefs over the Gurunsi and Busansi, which had been on the increase as recently as the 1880's. Except for these slight changes, however, the Mossi traditional organization remained as it had been since the immediate post-conquest period.

Instead of changing the traditional administrative structure, the Governor introduced a new administrative device, the *Conseil de notables indigènes* (Council of Native Notables) in Ouagadougou in April 1920, and subsequently established similar councils at Ouahigouya, Tenkodogo, Kaya, and Koudougou. By establishing these councils, the administration hoped to provide the Mossi with a better understanding of the ideals and standards of French policy; to place the French administrators in closer contact with the people, who "had been almost totally ignorant of the functioning of [the French] administration"; and to form "an elite who will later be able to contribute in a closer and more personal way to the economic and financial life of the colony."[37] The council at Ouagadougou, which was to serve as a model for Mossi country, was to be presided over by the cercle commanders and to have from ten to sixteen members, including the traditional provincial ministers of the Mossi (with life membership); members of the Moslem community in Ouagadougou; and representatives of foreign groups living in the capital, of French citizens, and of the veterans of World War I. No provision was made to include the Mossi chiefs, but hope was expressed that they would support these councils and work with them.

These councils failed primarily because they turned out to be organs of the French administration and in fact functioned as such, and because their members had varied and often conflicting status. They met two or three times a year at administrative centers and discussed such things as personal taxes, the allocation and execution of prestations, the use of Mossi labor in foreign areas, the licensing and taxation of African traders and merchants, the status of women, the expansion of cultivation, stock breeding, and the collection of shea-butter nuts and kapok pods. None of the Mossi or African representatives had sufficient power or knowledge to challenge the ideas or recommendations of the European members. And the Mossi ministers, while submissive to the Europeans, found it difficult to accept as equals the representatives of non-Mossi peoples who prior to the conquest had lived at Ouagadougou only at the sufferance of the Mogho Naba; nor were they willing to discuss administrative affairs with these people or with the Mossi commoners who represented the war veterans. Ultimately, the councils became rubber stamps for the policies of the

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

administration, and failed to serve as an administrative training ground for either the Mossi ministers or the commoner representatives.[88]

During the Hesling period, the Mossi district chiefs remained in power, but the French, through their African administrative assistants, kept a stricter watch on district affairs. The chiefs regained some of their judicial (or, rather, conciliatory) power in 1921 when the Governor, dissatisfied with the territory's legal system, promulgated a decree reorganizing the courts and giving the Mossi district and village chiefs the right of adjudication in minor cases involving civil and commercial matters.[89] However, they had to send all cases involving serious crimes and all appeals from other cases to higher courts. Because their subjects could appeal to the subdivision courts and because they risked reprimand by administrators when their verdicts were deemed unjust, many Mossi chiefs complied. They tried to do so even when the litigants themselves would have preferred not to deal with the administrators. Often the chiefs overtly told the litigants to go to the administrators but covertly persuaded them not to do so. In this manner they observed all proprieties toward both the French and their subjects.

The village and district courts had to send all criminal offenses such as assault and battery cases and major thefts, as well as appeals against their verdicts, to a "tribunal of the first degree," which was presided over by a subdivision commander and his Mossi assessors. Cases were taken to the tribunal only when the dispute was extremely serious or when people were gravely injured, because Mossi villagers hesitated to take their cases to officials who, when not swamped with work, had little patience with the complexities of Mossi litigation. Moreover, the Mossi feared to subject their fellows to the rigors of the Indigénat, which was still in existence, because, as one official source declares, "If this regime subsists, it is because the Voltaic populations have not yet reached a level of development that would permit the withdrawal of a weapon which is so readily useful to the commanders of administrative units. Besides, when judiciously managed, it does not present any danger in these underdeveloped regions."

Cases which the subdivision commanders considered too serious for their courts were sent to "tribunals of the second degree" at the cercle level. From there, cases were sent to a "colonial court of appeal," which was presided over by the Chief Officer of Political Affairs of the territory and which could sentence a criminal to three to ten years in prison. More serious crimes carrying longer prison terms or the death penalty were sent up to the Supreme Court at Dakar. Owing in part to the lack of communication between the rural districts and the higher courts, the Mossi

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

were seldom able to follow a case higher than the subdivision level. In cases involving long imprisonment or the death penalty, the relatives of the condemned person usually learned about the sentence through rumors from the capital, but seldom through the administration.

One judicial duty which the administration gave the Mossi chiefs and which they had always disliked was the adjudication of domestic cases. They found such cases even more difficult and distasteful after Hesling issued a circular on "The Condition of the Native Woman," which is summarized in a semi-official report as follows:

> [The Governor] is pained to see [the Mossi woman] so often subjected to a special form of slavery which, notably at the time of marriage, reduces her to the role of a domestic animal. Without wishing to interfere with ingrained native traditions, the Governor desires "to prime the desirable evolution by means of judicial decisions." Thus he comes to the decision that in those lawsuits concerning marriage in which formerly the woman was not consulted, she must henceforth be present and must argue the case with her husband. M. Hesling trusts that this procedural reform, which he hopes will give the native woman "a consciousness of her individuality and her rights," will be followed in the courts by further reforms. First of all [the courts] must weaken and then progressively modify those traditions which promote injustice toward women. . . . Questions will no doubt be raised as to whether it is necessary to set up regulations on such matters. However, M. Hesling advises his administrators to adjust [such regulations] to, and apply them with respect for, ancestral traditions. It will be interesting to see the results obtained in this attempt, and to see whether the "moussos" [a malapropism denoting Mossi women] of the Upper Volta will acquire some individuality."

The Mossi chiefs were not told that the Governor's circular recommending a change in the status of women stipulated that traditional practices be taken into account. But even if they had been told, they would not have been impressed, because any fundamental change in the status of women would have placed their whole society in jeopardy. Woman exchange stood at the core of a social, economic, and political nexus that held Mossi society together. True, in pre-conquest times most quarrels and lawsuits were caused by trouble over women, but the marriage system was upheld by all the other institutions. Even after the arrival of the French and the weakening of the chiefs' judicial role, the Mossi could punish violators of the marriage system by imposing social sanctions. They now feared that if the French passed laws giving the women free choice in marriage, and the chiefs had to adjudicate on the basis of these laws, all traditional sanctions would become obsolete. Neither the chiefs nor the Mossi on the Councils of Native Notables nor the elders welcomed any discussion about

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

[Pre-World War II Period]

the status of women. They maintained that the French had conquered the Mossi men, not the women, and that the administration should not interfere with the way in which a Moaga treated his wife. Ironically enough, there was little the administration could do for the Mossi women, since the latter were too timid to approach the Europeans. Most of them continued to react to maltreatment from their husbands by running away, but now they went to the Gold Coast with labor migrants instead of returning to their lineage.

Although the Mossi chiefs had little autonomy in the administration of their subjects, and had to look to the administration for guidance in nearly everything they did, they were not completely powerless. They were the representatives of the colonial administration on the local level, and as such they could control their subjects through the differential allocation of prestations. Those Mossi who had maintained the traditional respect for the chiefs could look forward to less arduous tasks for the administration and to the avoidance of forced labor or army recruitment. Those who by their actions or attitude indicated that they had lost respect for the chiefs were penalized accordingly. Chiefs were also able to retain some control over their subjects because they were still the centers of social, economic, and political relations within their territories. They still received homage and presents from their more loyal or traditionalistic subjects, and with these goods and services they could bind other persons to themselves. Clever chiefs were able to manipulate the colonial administration and use it to enhance their traditional position so successfully that the administration and the missionaries had to take these men into account whenever they wished to establish contact with the population.

The desire of the missionaries to establish missions and schools for the purpose of converting the Mossi to Christianity presented the chiefs with a great challenge because, unlike the administration, the missionaries tried to establish direct contact with the people. The chiefs not only did not like to have Europeans living in their midst, but feared that they would lose control over their subjects who went to live near the missions. However, the chiefs could not refuse to grant the missionaries land on which to build missions and schools. They also provided labor for them, just as they did for the construction of administrative buildings and roads. Similarly, the chiefs recruited children for the mission schools in the same spirit as they recruited students for the schools of the administration. The difference between the Catholic missionaries and the administration with respect to education was that while the former were interested in educating the children of chiefs, they were also interested in children from other backgrounds. Nevertheless, the majority of chiefs continued to send to school

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

only those children whose parents could not prevent them from being sent away. Many of the boys came from serf and commoner families; a few others were the orphan sons or very young sons of chiefs. As a result, few of the chiefs' sons received an education, and thus they were later unable to compete effectively with commoners who had gained a valuable education at the missions.

Acknowledging the average Moaga's refusal to adopt Catholicism as long as his chiefs remained pagan, the missionaries made a valiant attempt to convert the chiefs. Monsignor Socquet reports that when asked why they did not become Catholics most Mossi replied: " 'We are looking to our chief,' that is to say, 'We will follow our chief in conversion as in all other matters. If he is in favor of it, we will not go against his will.' " Socquet concludes: "It is thus easy to understand how important is the conversion of the chiefs, or at least their sympathy for our religion, to the spread of Catholicism."[41] However, the chiefs and their eldest sons were the most difficult to convert because they were responsible for supervising and carrying out the traditional sacrifices to the royal ancestors, without whose help the Mossi people believed that they could not survive.

The attempts of the missionaries to recruit as many girls as possible for education and conversion alienated the chiefs, because it got them involved in the delicate problem of the status of women and struck at one of the few remaining bulwarks of their traditional power. The problem was that many of the girls whom the missionaries wanted as students were or had been betrothed, or were actually living in their husbands' compounds, when they were taken to the mission. Here the girls were educated and, in the words of Sister Marie-André, "wished to abandon those practices" that were "repugnant to them"—i.e., they rejected polygynous marriages and desired to choose their own spouses.[42] Those men who lost fiancées or wives as a result of missionary activities sought redress from their chiefs. But the chiefs were powerless against the missionaries, and after the promulgation of Hesling's circular nothing could be done. Many Mossi chiefs were also parties to the defeated marriage alliances because of their involvement in the pughsiure system. Because their prestige and power were at stake, and because they were unable to combat the Europeans openly, these chiefs often used devious means to spirit away the girls from the missions and to return them to their fiancés or husbands. Such activities angered the missionaries, who through the administrators either punished the guilty chiefs or sought new legislation in this area.

The chiefs, the missions, and the French administration were perpetually embroiled because both the chiefs and the missions wanted Mossi women for their own purposes. The administration was caught in the

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

middle. The Mossi accused the missionaries of being especially anxious to get girls who could become the wives of their converts, and accused them of "stealing" the women. Paradoxically, this charge is supported by a missionary of the White Fathers:

> A Mossi who is unable to acquire a wife by traditional means must either remain unmarried or seduce another man's wife . . . they must choose between celibacy and immorality.
>
> Such a state of affairs creates many problems for the missions, especially since the system is recognized and sanctioned by the colonial authorities. . . . Young native Christians are obviously placed in a very awkward position. Their conversion angers their parents, who refuse to give them a wife; neither will their friends bestow a daughter upon them, because they know that they will not receive one in return, since a Christian may not give a daughter in marriage to a pagan. . . . *Consequently, unless the missionaries help them to find a wife, they must remain unmarried—a very discouraging prospect.* [Italics mine.][13]

The Mossi chiefs objected strongly to these activities of the missionaries on behalf of their converts, for they insisted that marriages could not legally take place outside the traditional pattern of reciprocity in woman exchange. They argued that the priests had no daughters, but that once they had obtained wives for their male converts, the daughters of these converts would in fact be pughsiudse to the priests and would be used by them to obtain further converts. There was some truth in this argument. Some young men, anxious to obtain wives without trouble and hard work, approached the mission girls, only to be told that the missionaries alone could sanction their marriage. The priests asked only that the potential husbands become Catholics. Some young men agreed and became Catholics; others reneged on their promise after they had been baptized and married. When a young man left the Church himself and also forbade his wife to go to church, the missionaries sought help from the district chief. If he did not satisfy them, they asked the district commander to intervene on their behalf. The young man then had to return to the Church with his wife or leave the district. Many men chose the latter course, taking their wives to visit some distant relatives or to the Gold Coast, until the women, burdened by motherhood and reintegrated into the traditional social system, lost all desire to renew their association with the missionaries. Under these circumstances, the missionaries could not summon the couple to the administrative center, because they had not violated any of the tenets of the Governor's circular. Furthermore, most administrators, like the Mossi chiefs, had little interest in such cases.

The Mossi chiefs considered the Catholic missionaries a greater threat

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964

FA28 Mossi FA28

[Pre-Word War II Period]

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to Mossi society and to their own authority than the French administration itself. This was primarily due to the fact that these missionaries, as Frenchmen, were very deeply involved not only in preaching Christianity, but also in changing Mossi society by introducing modern medical practices and education. Moreover, as was later brought out, they did not hesitate to use coercion to gain their ends. In seeking to understand why the number of patients in a maternity clinic had declined from an all-time high in the late 1920's and early 1930's to almost zero in the late 1940's, André Dupont, a Catholic missionary, was told by Mossi women, "We are no longer forced to go." He comments: "Was it the fear of sanction that accounted for the unanimous use of the clinic? Alas! It would seem to be so. The use of force and sanction have made a charitable institution odious. It would have been better if the mothers had only been encouraged to use the clinics. 'These natives do not understand,' I am sometimes told. But how are they expected to understand?"[44]

The American Protestant missionaries did little to challenge the authority of either the Mossi chiefs or the French administration. They were interested only in religious education, and concentrated on teaching the Scripture. The British social critic Geoffrey Gorer, who visited the Mossi during the Hesling period, reports: "There were some American missionaries in this village, a whole family living in a house filled with texts; I do not know what creed they preached or with what success. . . . They spoke with a dispassionate 'none of our business' disapproval of the ill treatment of the negroes, who they said were ruled entirely by fear."[45]

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The Moslems, on the other hand, took advantage of the declining power of the Mossi chiefs to spread their doctrines. They pointed out, with little fear of contradiction, that formerly the chiefs had checked the spread of Islam in order to protect their own religion, which supported their political power, but that this power had now been broken by the French. They continued to preach that as soon as all the black people became Moslems the whites would leave, and pointed out that whereas the missionaries had succeeded in getting the administration to attack the marriage customs of the pagan Mossi, they had not interfered with the marriage customs of the Moslem Mossi.[46] Moreover, the Moslems tried to impress upon the chiefs that conversion to Islam brought with it the benefit of being judged according to Koranic principles rather than native law or French statutes. This propaganda was relatively successful, and by the end of the Hesling period the number of Koranic schools and converts among the Mossi had increased eightfold. True to form, however, the Mossi chiefs seldom adopted Islam or permitted their elder sons to do so. But they did allow

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

their younger sons to become Moslems, and soon abandoned their active resistance to Islam.

Hesling did not permit the Mossi chiefs to revive their traditional religio-political rituals and ceremonies such as the Tense, but he continued to tolerate the Basgha. The French banned the Mossi market chiefs, because they believed (with some justification) that these officials used their offices to procure revenue for the chiefs. The difficulty was that the market chiefs were also responsible for arranging sacrifices to the market deities, which in the absence of such sacrifices would not protect the people from quarrels and violence in the market place. Some chiefs covertly retained their market chiefs; others obeyed the administration and remained anxious over the behavior of their subjects in the market. In general, however, most Mossi chiefs tried to adjust to the religious changes that were taking place, and sought to maintain at least surface amicability with all religious groups. Commenting upon the behavior of the Mogho Naba in this regard, Dim Delobson states:

> The Mogho Naba, above all, is a believer in animism like all his subjects, and it is hard to understand how he manages to reconcile his fetishism with the complex dogmas of Islam and with the many interdictions of Christianity. However, the Mogho Naba is quite capable of being a Catholic or a Moslem on appropriate occasions, while at the same time respecting the traditions of his ancestors. Thus, when the Christians are celebrating Christmas, the emperor of the Mossi devoutly attends midnight Mass. Nevertheless, he wears his fez [really the bonnet which is the symbol of his office], just as the bishop wears his miter. He likewise embraces Islam for the three Moslem festivals.[47]

Hesling failed in his attempt to develop the Upper Volta as a viable colony, and many of the chiefs whom he had used as his auxiliaries lost not only a great deal of power but also a great deal of prestige in the eyes of their subjects because of the role they had played vis-à-vis the administration. By 1929 the economy of the Upper Volta was in poor condition: cotton production had declined; taxes (raised from 5,800,000 francs in 1921 to 18,274,000 francs in 1927 and scheduled to be raised to 26,400,000 francs in 1930) were unbearable; many of the roads that were too extensive, too little used, and too difficult to maintain had been abandoned; and more than 46,000 laborers who had worked in the cotton fields and on the roads had fled to the neighboring Gold Coast.[48] The Colonial Minister, Sarraut, ordered that the colony of the Upper Volta be dismembered. He states in his decree of September 1932 that the suppression of the Upper Volta "would permit appreciable savings, and would make the adminis-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

[World War II Period]

according to the Mossi, the imminent death of an important chief; secondly, a meteor had passed unexpectedly over Ouagadougou between 8 and 9 P.M. [on March 12th], vividly impressing the Mogho Naba himself.

It is quite possible that the emotions induced by these phenomena aggravated the heart condition that felled him. Certain people have maintained that the Mogho Naba, being opposed to all foreign domination and convinced that serious developments were imminent, voluntarily commited suicide by poison in order to elude them. So far, there is no proof that such a rumor has really been adrift. The matter is under strict investigation.[80]

The Mossi people practiced as best they could the traditional rituals connected with the death of a Mogho Naba. During the interregnum, however, the administration did not permit the usual chaos, ritual or otherwise. One administration report states: "Young people tried to steal things in the market, taking advantage of the old customs, but they were checked."[81] A later report adds that the traditions of the Napoko and the Kourita were honored, and that one hundred persons were arrested for the ritual larceny of small objects.

The traditional Mossi authorities allegedly requested that the deceased Mogho Naba, as one who had worn the Legion of Honor, be given full military honors. This required the placing of his body in a coffin so that the funeral cortege could move through the streets, a fact which introduced a new ritual element in royal funerals. Once this ceremony was over, however, the representatives of the administration withdrew, and the body was buried according to customary rites.

The traditional electoral college then proceeded with the task of choosing a new ruler. The choice was between Issoufou Congo, Kom's eldest son, who was then a lieutenant in the French Colonial Army in the Ivory Coast, and his younger brother, Etienne Congo, chief of the Doulougou district. With the administration's permission, the college elected Issoufou Congo. He took the title "Sagha" (the second Mogho Naba to bear that name), and was installed with traditional ceremonies.

The message Sagha sent to the French High Commissioner bears quoting. Like the traditional speeches of newly elected Mogho Nanamse, it was believed by the Mossi people to contain subtle jibes at enemies, praises to benefactors and friends, and portents of future plans. The Mogho Naba said:

> At the moment when I take command of the Mossi people, I must thank you for having placed me on the throne of my father. I give you assurance of my fidelity toward France in all circumstances. Be assured by this testimony that my father will remain for me an honored person and a guide. I will walk in the footsteps of my father. In these difficult times, my people and I re-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

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[p. 178-B]

(*Left*) Mogho Naba Kougri and Ouezzain Coulibaly, who became Vice President of the Government Council of the Upper Volta in 1957. (*Center*) Maurice Yamégo, President of the Republic of Upper Volta. (*Right*) Mogho Naba Kougri (1937–) on his ceremonial horse at his installation.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964

FA28 Mossi FA28

[post-world war II period]

port of the coastal Ivory Coast population. There was little they could do about it, however, because 'the decision of the Mogho Naba was irrevocable.'"[4]

The election was hotly contested. The candidates based their campaigns on local issues: taxes, forced labor, the lack of public services, the status of the traditional chiefs, colonialism, racial discrimination, and so on. The Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), led by Houphouët-Boigny, stressed the need for combating racial discrimination and exploitation by European planters. The Union pour la Défense des Interêts de la Haute-Volta (UDIHV), formed by the Mogho Naba and a group of mission-educated young men and led by the Baloum Naba, stressed the need to end forced labor, especially among the Mossi, and to place all the Mossi under one territorial government. The UDIHV realized that it had little chance of gaining votes in the south, and therefore concentrated its efforts in the north. However, no credence is to be given to the story that "Whenever [the Baloum Naba] was free from [official] supervision, he told the people, 'Vote for my friend Houphouët. . . . What would I do in Paris, with my forty wives and at my age? I can't speak a blasted word of French.'"[5] Houphouët-Boigny won the election by the surprisingly narrow margin of 12,650 to 11,620.[6]

Houphouët-Boigny played a leading role in persuading the first Constituent Assembly to submit to the voters a number of important liberal colonial reforms. These included the abolition of the Indigénat; the freedom of meeting and association; the bestowal of French citizenship on colonial peoples without affecting their traditional personal status; the use of the French Penal Code in all courts dealing with criminal cases; and the abolition of forced labor.[7]

There was some discussion in the Assembly of what role the traditional chiefs should play in the projected political structure of Overseas France. One group of delegates held that "the structure of the local Assemblies should be tied intimately to the existing structure of the overseas societies. Otherwise, they would be bogus Assemblies whose decisions would serve the interests of only one class in the society, the dominant class."[8] These men felt that while many chiefs were conservatives and might incline to "neo-feudalism," the new elite of young educated Africans who aspired to replace the Europeans were, for the most part, European-trained and out of contact with the rural masses. These delegates believed that only the chiefs could provide adequate popular leadership, and that the French Union could not cohere or develop unless the chiefs had some status vis-à-vis the elite and prestige in the eyes of the people.[9]

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Post World War II Period]

It will be well if the Mogho Naba understands that he owns but the vestige of a past whose hour has irrevocably tolled, and that his message to the President of the Council [de Gaulle] commits no one in the Upper Volta but himself, a mere citizen like the others.

I deplore the discrimination which the message of the Mogho Naba implicitly contains. I should like to say to the Mogho Naba that in the Upper Volta there are no Mossi, Fulani, or Bobo people, but only Black people struggling for their liberty. No Mossi or any other Voltaic would agree to the Mogho Naba's expression of fidelity to France in his name. If this must be done, then the Territorial Assembly and the Government Council alone are qualified to do so.[48]

Despite these attacks and numerous suggestions in the press that the Mogho Naba and the Mossi chiefs were developing a "Touré complex" (i.e., the fear of suffering the same fate as the Fulani chiefs of Fouta Djallon, who had been deposed by Sékou Touré, Vice-President of the Guinea Government Council), the Mossi ruler actively supported acceptance of the constitution of the Fifth French Republic, which promised the colonies full internal self-government within the "French Community." Since the constitution was adopted by the Upper Volta population by an overwhelming favorable vote of 99.1 per cent, no one could estimate how effective the Mogho Naba's support had been.[49]

Coulibaly died just before the referendum, and was replaced on an interim basis by Yaméogo. The parliamentarians accordingly had to choose a new leader, now to be President of the Government Council, as well as to draw up a constitution for the new republic and determine whether it would join any of the regional federations then being considered by several territories. The Territorial Assembly was scheduled to meet in extraordinary session on October 17, 1958, to select a successor to Coulibaly. The Mogho Naba, anticipating dissension and perhaps once again seeking the limelight, sent a message to the representatives on October 15, urging "a government of union and public safety." But the politicians resented what they regarded as his interference in matters that did not concern him; few, if any, took his message seriously, and none replied.

The Mogho Naba therefore decided to force the issue. He summoned his traditional ministers to a conference, and, despite the objections of the Baloum Naba, obtained their permission to order his Tansoba to muster his warriors and lay siege to the Territorial Assembly. Early in the morning of October 17, about 3,000 Mossi warriors, armed with bows and arrows, swords, spears, and ancient flint guns, converged on the Assembly. Later that morning, the Mogho Naba himself, accompanied by his Tansoba,

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

CHAPTER THREE

1. Dim Delobson, pp. 8–9.

2. Crozat, p. 4849.

3. *Ibid.* The Mossi always use multiples of three in connection with masculine affairs.

4. Archives, Document 15G-190 (1897–98, Haute Volta).

5. Dim Delobson, p. 37. The difficulty here is caused by the Mossi words and their meanings. For example, the words for "God" are Ouennam and Guendé. The words for "sun" are the same. The ethnologists can speculate about whether the Mossi once worshiped the sun or whether a high god has evolved into a supreme deity. But the Mossi do not agree that their use of the same words for God and for the sun implies that they believe God is the sun, or that the sun is their God. It should be pointed out *inter alia* that many African peoples are not awed by their gods and grant them human feelings and attributes. The Mossi regard their supreme being Ouennam as an otiose deity who is not too concerned with human affairs. It is the ancestors who provide the sanctions for good conduct.

6. It seems certain that Ibn Battuta saw a similar salutation in Mali: "The Negroes are of all people the most submissive to their king, and the most abject in their behavior before him. They swear by his name, saying *Mansa Souliman ki* [the Emperor Souliman has commanded]. If he summons any of them while he is holding an audience in his pavilion, the person summoned takes off his clothes and puts on worn garments, removes his turban and dons a dirty skullcap, and enters with his garments and trousers raised knee-high. He goes forward in an attitude of humility and dejection, and knocks the ground hard with his elbows, then stands with bowed head and bent back, listening to what he says. If anyone addresses the king and receives a reply from him, he uncovers his back and throws dust over his head and back, for all the world like a bather splashing himself with water. I used to wonder how it was that they did not blind themselves" (Gibb, p. 327; cf. Mangin, p. 15).

Obviously, Ibn Battuta found this salutation distasteful. Most Europeans feel the same way about the Mossi salute. If a Moaga visited England, he might be equally struck by the sight of a great soldier or statesman kneeling before a *woman ruler* and being touched on the shoulder with a sword.

7. It is interesting to compare this account with Ibn Battuta's description of Mansa Souliman, king of Mali: "On certain days the sultan holds audiences in the palace yard, where there is a platform under a tree, with three steps; this they call the *pempi*. . . . The sultan comes out of a door in the corner of the palace, carrying a bow in his hand and a quiver on his back. On his head he has a golden skullcap bound with a gold band which has narrow ends shaped like knives, more than a span in length. His usual dress is a velvety red tunic, made of the European fabric called *mutanfas*. The sultan is preceded by his musicians, who carry gold and silver guimbris (two-stringed guitars), and behind him come three hundred armed slaves. He walks in a leisurely fashion, affecting a very slow movement, and even stops from time to time. On reaching the *pempi*, he stops and looks round the assembly, then ascends it in the sedate manner of a preacher ascending a mosque pulpit. As he takes his seat, the drums, trumpets, and bugles are sounded" (Gibb, p. 326).

8. It is possible that the Mossi either borrowed this tradition from Mali or shared part of the Mali king complex, for Ibn Battuta reports that a similar rite was held in Mali during the fourteenth century. He says that when the ruler entered the pavilion for the morning ceremony, "two saddled and bridled horses are brought, along with two goats, which they hold to serve as a protection against the evil eye" (Gibb, p. 326).

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

CHAPTER SEVEN

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1. Dim Delobson, pp. 153ff.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 251–54.
3. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 674.
4. Crozat, p. 4849.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Skinner, "Trade and Markets," pp. 237–78.
7. Barth, III, 644–49.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 202–4.
9. Dubois, pp. 282–92, 300.
10. Great Britain, Parliamentary papers: Cd. 788–27, No. 357, Acc. Papers, Vol. LXIV (1902).
11. Marc, p. 178.
12. Binger, I, 467.
13. Crozat, p. 4849.
14. Binger, I, 465.
15. Mangin, p. 23.
16. Dim Delobson, pp. 85–86.
17. Ruelle, p. 679.
18. Bovill, p. 244.
19. Gautier, p. 139; cf. Mangin, p. 112.
20. Cf. Sa'di, p. 168.

[422]
21. The chief of the Kamboinse was the only Mossi "chief" to possess a stool, which [174] is indicative of an Akan origin. The Akan origin of this group is further supported by Koelle's evidence: a Mossi informant told him that the Mossi called the Ashanti "Kamboinse" (Koelle, p. 6).

22. Skinner, "The Mossi 'Pogsioure,'" pp. 20–22.
23. Cf. Ouédraogo and Prost, pp. 16–18.
24. Dim Delobson, p. 25.
25. Binger, I, 470.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 502–4.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 504–5.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 502.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Cf. Dim Delobson, p. 156. He speculates that the Mogho Naba himself sacrificed the animals in the presence of his senior wife and courtiers.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

[184]
3. Tauxier (*Le Noir du Yatenga*, p. 379) reports that a comparable ceremony among the Yatenga Mossi was called the "Bega," and that in reality it was a Fulse ceremony "adopted by the Mossi." According to him, both the Fulse and the Mossi held this festival in order to obtain good harvests the following year, and made sacrifices to "the ancestors, to the Earth, and to God."

[177]
4. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 588.

[114]
5. Dim Delobson's description (pp. 148 ff) of the Tense differs somewhat from that given to me by my respondents. According to his version, the Tansoba played the role I have ascribed to the Larhalle Naba. Furthermore, he states that the Tense was held on Friday, an impossible fact since Saturday is the Mossi "day of the dead." In any case, all of my respondents insisted that Saturday, and not Friday, was the day on which the Tense was held. It is possible that Dim Delobson mistook the eve of the festival for its beginning, in which case his error is understandable. In most other respects our descriptions are not too different.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
7. There is a widespread tradition in Mossi country that the Tenkodogo Naba made and still makes similar sacrifices at Kouroungoutenga and Sansabloga, two important earth shrines. There is a controversy about whether human sacrifices were ever offered [797] there. The missionaries in the region claim they were. The Mossi deny this and accuse the missionaries of slander.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

133 Red and White Voltas are merely a series of small stagnant pools during the dry season. In some low-lying areas around the main water courses, trapped water provides the moisture for dank riverine vegetation.

134 The soils of Mossi country are mainly ferruginous with red argils and pure silicates of aluminum predominating in the northern region. The soils in the south are thin, sandy, and formed from the decom-
137 position of crystalline rocks and sandstones. During the dry season the Mossi landscape appears too sterile to produce plant life, but with the first drops of rain the entire country soon becomes covered with the grasses and shrubs which are characteristic of this Sudanese region. The uncultivated but valuable trees of this area include the Baobab *(Adansonia digitata)*, the locust bean *(Parkia biglobosa)*, the shea-butter *(Butyrospermum parkii)*, the tamarind *(Tamarindus*
241 *indica)* and the kapok *(Bombax costatum)*. The plants which the Mossi cultivate include varieties of cereals, roots and legumes. Sorghums *(Sorghum vulgare)* and millets *(Pennisetum typhoides)* are their staples, with maize *(Zea mays)* filling the role of a secondary but rather useful crop because its growing cycle is shorter than that of other important crops and it breaks the "hungry period." Maize would be a more important crop to the Mossi if it could grow on soil less fertile than what is normally available around the Mossi compound—the area where it brings the greatest yield. Peanuts, onions,
249 rice, beans, okra, peas and sweet potatoes are other food crops. To-
248 bacco is grown for local consumption, but the crops which have the greatest export value are cotton and indigo, used for making cloth and dyeing it.

224 The wild fauna of the country does not provide a major part of the
262 food needs of the Mossi people. The several species of deer and antelope, monkeys, rabbits and wild pig are hunted and used for food.
136 But the elephants and lions which are also found in the country are sources of great distress to the people because the former decimate the growing crops and the latter attack and kill the grazing animals.

231 The Mossi rear two main types of cattle: a zebu-like one in the north-
[234] ern regions and a small dwarf variety in the south. These animals are kept primarily for their milk and for export, and are seldom killed
231 for meat until they are very old. The animals which provide the
262 Mossi with meat are goats, sheep, chickens and guinea fowls. Pig-
[177] raising is not widespread and seems to be declining in importance with the increasing observance of Islamic food taboos, even among
262 people who are still pagan. Fish forms only a minor part of the Mossi
[167] diet and is obtained mainly from traders rather than from local activ-
231 ities. The Mossi also rear donkeys and horses for which they have

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

It is clear that the volume of this trade could not have been enlarged since the French conquest which, as we know, had disrupted Mossi society. Therefore our conclusion must be that it must have existed prior to the coming of the Europeans.

The caravaneers used cowries and cloth as trade currency and in some cases even bartered one type of commodity for another. Cowries appear to have been the chief currency used and came close to being used for all purposes. Evidence for the use of cloth as currency comes from Barth and Marc. Barth met a trader who had

> . . . a good quantity of the gabaga, or cotton strips, of Mosi with him, which form the staple currency in the whole tract of country from Libta to Timbuktu, ten Dr'a being reckoned equal to one hundred shells. (Barth 1859 : III, 198)

The big rolls of cotton cloth which Marc saw being loaded by Mossi caravaneers were said by them to serve the purpose of buying food ("They are for eating") in regions where cloth was the necessary currency (Marc 1909 : 172 f.n.). The traders apparently resorted to barter whenever and wherever they could or when their currency was in short supply. This appears to have been the case when Binger visited the Mossi in 1888. Cowries were then in short supply and the people were using slaves, valued at 50,000 to 65,000 cowries apiece, to obtain goods. Horses could be bought for as many as two or four slaves apiece. Traders apparently kept the cowry equivalence in mind when using other commodities to barter with, but we cannot be sure of this since Binger himself, and not the traders, may have been conscious of the equivalence (Binger 1892 : II, 498).

The prices which the traders paid and received for their goods differed greatly from place to place, according to the season of the year and over a span of several years. The earliest price data are given by Barth for the 1850's:

> As regards Selga [Salaga], the district to which the Hausa traders go for their supply of this article, three points are considered essential to the business of the Kola trade; first, that the people of Mosi bring their asses; secondly, that the Tonawa, or natives of Asanti, bring the nut in sufficient quantities; and thirdly, that the state of the road is such as not to prevent the Hausa people from arriving. If one of these conditions is wanting, the trade is not flourishing. The price of the asses rises with the cheapness of the guro [kola nut]. The average price of an ass in the market of Selga is 15,000 [cowry] Shell: While in Hausa the general price does not exceed 5,000. But the fataki, or native traders, take only as many asses with them from Hausa as are necessary for transporting their luggage, as the toll, or

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

175 436 437 Cowries used to be chief medium of exchange in Mossi markets until the Europeans arrived. In addition the people bartered specific goods for other products. The prices of goods in these markets fluctuated from time to time. Prices were highest during the planting season when most goods were scarce, and lowest during the harvest periods, but we have little precise information about the prices of goods in the traditional markets. Even Barth's information is too sketchy to deal with. Our first reliable data come from Tauxier, whose writings cover the first decade (1896-1906) of the conquest. Using the then official rate of one franc equals 1,000 cowries, the prices of a few representative products were: horses, 40 to 100 francs (40,000 to 100,000 cowries); cattle, 30 to 40 francs (30,000 to 40,000 cowries); chickens, 250 cowries; guinea fowls, 250 to 300 cowries; hides, 3,000 cowries; pottery jars, 300 cowries; cotton trousers, 200 cowries; baskets, 1,500 cowries; and locust-bean balls, 100 cowries (Tauxier 1912 : 466 ff.).

175 435 Mangin, whose work covers the period from about 1910 to 1913, when the value of the franc was lowered to one franc equals 700 to 800 cowries, lists the approximate prices for the following goods; "Millet, 0.02 franc a kilogram; rice, 0.10 franc a kilogram; *fabirama*, 0.05 franc a kilogram; shea butter, 0.50 franc a kilogram; milk butter, 1.50 francs a kilogram; peanuts, 0.07 franc a kilogram; peanut oil, 0.50 franc a liter; one jar of ordinary millet beer, containing about six to eight liters, 0.20 franc; one jar of strong millet beer *(tose)*, containing about six to eight liters, 0.40 franc; hydromel *(bese)*, 0.15 franc a liter; chicken, 0.40 franc; average goat, 3 to 4 francs; large goat, 8 to 10 francs; average sheep, 3.50 francs for a ram, 4 francs, for an ewe; large sheep, 8 to 10 francs; donkey, 25 to 30 francs; horse, 150 francs; small cow (no hump), 50 francs; zebu cow, 70 francs; goat skin, 0.30 franc; cow skin, 1 franc; salt bars, from 1.50 to 2 francs a kilogram; kola nuts, from 0.03 to 0.10 franc apiece; one hoe, about 0.60 franc; cloth: strip of white cloth, 0.05 franc, about 0.60 franc a cubit; white blanket, 2 francs; indigo-dyed blanket, 3 francs; striped blanket, 4 francs; medium-sized shirt, 2.50 francs" (Mangin 1921 : 53). In dealing with these prices, a number of things should be kept in mind: first of all, these prices fluctuated very much during the year; secondly [438] they varied from region to region within the country; and thirdly, although these prices are given in francs during this period, it was still possible to use cowries to buy a large number of the products.

● 177 436 [437] [438] Enormous changes have taken place in the Mossi economic and exchange systems over the decades following the studies of Tauxier and Mangin. Even before, but certainly after World War I, the French pressure on the Mossi to pay taxes in francs finally resulted

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

in the adoption of this currency as the medium of exchange in most markets.[11] The one-franc piece and coins of smaller denominations were those most often used because they were ideally suited to the petty trading that took place in the markets. The franc even became the standard of value in the larger markets, but one receives only 3 local francs for a five-franc note C.F.A. or seven francs for a ten-franc note C.F.A. These changes in value seem to occur by common consensus, since it is impossible to discover who it was that changed the exchange rate. A further fact is that many Europeans remain unaware of these changes since they seldom go to the local markets themselves. When they do go and insist upon the official exchange rate, the "unofficial" market chief appears and takes over the situation, giving the *nansara* ("conqueror" or "master," the way in which every European is regarded) what he wishes.

While the equivalence between the cowrie, the old brass franc, and the franc C.F.A. works splendidly when products are sold in small quantities, I found the system difficult to understand when more expensive goods are traded. For example, when one buys meat, an expensive item, the butcher accepts either the official francs or the local currency and gives change in both. The difficulty here is that since the butcher uses no scales, one is never sure about the price or about the system of value the butcher is using. The most that can be done if one does not receive as much meat as expected is to haggle with the butcher until he adds more. However, this haggling leaves unresolved the problem of the value of one's official money in terms of the unofficial money, and the product which it is intended to buy. One is thus left with the *impression* that there must be an internal consistency to the exchange system, or barring this, that the local people accept the system as it is as a matter of expediency. On the other hand, the vendors of products with fixed prices such as matches, cigarettes and the like appear to make differential profits when they

(11) Mangin (1921 : 61–62) reports that the Mossi had great difficulty obtaining the five-franc piece which they needed to pay their taxes because the "Europeans who live in Mossi country, including all the riflemen and provincial guards do not put into circulation a quarter of the five-franc pieces which are required each year from the natives. At first the Mossi were taken by surprise and had to give 10 or even 15,000 cowries to obtain this famous coin, this *greegree* which was to free them from all difficulties with the white man. And yet at the official rate of exchange this coin is worth 5,000 cowries. Nowadays it is very difficult to find a native willing to give this much for one of the coins. The usual exchange rate varies from 3,500 to 4,000 cowries: the French currency has been depreciated. This must mean that the natives find elsewhere –through trading– this indispensable coin. They know that the tax must be paid every year, and instead of waiting till the last minute, as soon as they have accumulated the necessary cowries they secure the five-franc pieces from those who have fetched them from far away. The coins flow into the country, and the rate of exchange goes down."